



Washington State Conservation Commission

Meeting Packet

July 21, 2022

****This meeting will be held in-person with options to participate online or via teleconference***

Kittitas County, WA

Our Mission:

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

Business Meeting

Time

Please note that the times listed below are estimated and may vary. [Please visit the SCC website for the most up-to-date meeting information.](#)

Meeting accommodations

Persons with a disability needing an accommodation to participate in SCC public meetings should call Lori Gonzalez at 360-407-7417, or call 711 relay service. All accommodation requests should be received no later than Friday, July 15, 2022 to ensure preparations are appropriately made.

Online Meeting Coordinates

To participate online, please click on [this link](#) the day of the meeting. You may use your computer audio, or dial into the meeting using the information provided after logging in. Guests will be muted by the host upon login to allow for full discussion by Commissioners.

Public Comment

Public Comment will be allowed prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.

Agenda – Please note: all agenda items needing action will be listed under Tab 1.

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
8:30 a.m.		Call to order/Welcome/Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll Call Pledge of Allegiance Additions/Corrections to agenda items 	Chair Williams
8:45 a.m.	1.	Consent Agenda (<i>Action items</i>) <p>Public Comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) May 19, 2022 Draft Meeting Minutes b) Executive Director Travel Approval to the National Association of Conservation Districts Pacific & SW Region Meeting- Maui, Hawaii. 	Chair Williams Director Pettit

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
8:55 a.m.	1.	District Operations (<i>Action items</i>)	
		Public comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment	
		c) CREP Stream Miles Addition – Klickitat County	Brian Cochrane
		d) Pacific Conservation District Supervisor Appointment	Comm. Longrie
9:15 a.m.	1.	Commission Operations (<i>Action items</i>)	
		Public comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment	
		e) Updated SCC Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)	Bill Eller
		f) Commission Meetings Policy Revision	Shana Joy
		g) September Commission Meeting Dates (Pacific CD host)	Director Pettit
9:40 a.m.	1.	Budget and Finance (<i>Action item</i>)	
		Public comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment	
		h) 2023-2025 Budget Package Topics, Priority Order and Not to Exceed Limits	Director Pettit
9:50 a.m.	1.	Policy and Programs (<i>Action item</i>)	
		Public comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment	
		i) Farmland Protection and Land Access Program Guidelines	Kate Delavan
10:15 a.m. – 15 MINUTE BREAK			
10:30 a.m.	1.	Policy and Programs (cont'd) (<i>Action item</i>)	
		Public comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment	
		i) Salmon Recovery Funding Guidance	Ron Shultz

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
11:30 a.m.	1.	Policy and Programs (cont'd) <i>(Action item)</i>	
		Public comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment	
		k) Voluntary Stewardship Program Supplemental Funding Guidelines	Bill Eller
<hr/>			
12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.		LUNCH	
12:30 p.m.	2.	Policy & Programs (cont'd) <i>(Information only)</i>	
		a) Food Policy Forum Update	Ron Shultz / Kate Delavan
		b) Stock Water Update	Jon Culp
		c) Riparian Plant Propagation Program Update	Alison Halpern
		d) Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Update	Packet Item Only
<hr/>			
1:30 p.m.	2.	District Operations <i>(Information only)</i>	
		e) District Operations Regional Manager Report	Allisa Carlson
		f) Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (CAPP) Final Report.	Shana Joy
		g) Pierce Conservation District Election Update	Packet Item Only
		h) Center for Technical Development Update	Packet Item Only
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2:00 p.m.	2.	Partner Updates <i>(Information only)</i>	
		i) Environmental Protection Agency Region 10 Update	Nick Peak
		j) Department of Fish and Wildlife	Mike Kuttel, Jr.
		k) Natural Resources and Conservation Service Update	Roylene Comes at Night
<hr/>			
2:15 p.m.	2.	Commission Operations <i>(Information only)</i>	
		l) Communications Plan Update	Paige DeChambeau
		m) General SCC Update	Director Pettit
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2:45 p.m.		Executive Session per RCW 42.30.110 (f): to receive and evaluate complaints or charges brought against a public officer or employee and (g) to evaluate the qualifications of an applicant for public employment or to review the performance of a public employee.	Commission Members
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3:45 p.m.		Closing remarks- Adjourn	Chairman Williams

TAB 1

Regular Business Meeting ~

The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission/SCC) met virtually as well as in-person on Thursday, May 19, 2022 in Spokane, Washington. Chairman Daryl Williams called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m.

Note: All meeting materials can be found on our [meetings webpage](#). You will find the meeting packet with background information, presentations and past meeting information.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Daryl Williams, Chairman, Governor Appointee
Larry Cochran, Vice-Chairman, elected eastern region rep.
Sarah Spaeth, Governor Appointee
David Giglio, Department of Ecology
Dean Longrie, elected west region rep
Harold Crose, elected central region rep.
Jim Kropf, Washington State University (online)
Mike Mumford, Washington Association of Conservation Districts
Perry Beale, Department of Agriculture
Terra Rentz, Department of Natural Resources (online)

COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT

Christopher Pettit, Executive Director
Alicia McClendon, Administrative Assistant
Alison Halpern, Scientific Policy Advisor
Kate Delavan, Office of Farmland Preservation
Levi Keesecker, Natural Resource Scientist
Lori Gonzalez, Executive Assistant
Laura Meyer, Communications Director
Mike Baden, NC & NE Regional Manager
Paige DeChambeau, Communications & Outreach Manager
Ron Shultz, Policy Director
Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting & Budget
Shana Joy, District Operations Manager

Quorum present.

PARTNERS REPRESENTED

Nicholas Peak, US Environmental Protection Agency Region 10
Ryan Baye, WA Association of Conservation Districts
Roylene Comes At Night, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Nick Vira, NRCS Partnership Liaison (online)
Michael Kuttel, Jr., WA State Department of Fish and Wildlife (online)
Doug Rushton, National Association of Conservation Districts

GUESTS ATTENDED

Please see "**Attachment A**" for full list of attendees.

Draft May 19, 2022 Business Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the March 17, 2022 draft business meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion carried.

Out of State Travel Approval for Executive Director

Motion by Commissioner Crose to approve the Executive Director to attend the NW Land Camp, June 28-29, 2022, and the NASCA Board Meeting in York Beach, Maine, May 23-26, 2022. Seconded by Commissioner Longrie. Motion carried.

District Operations

Grant County Conservation District Petition for Name Change

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve Grant County Conservation District's petition to change the District's name to Columbia Basin Conservation District. Seconded by Commissioner Spaeth. Commissioner Crose abstained. Motion carried.

Conservation District Supervisor Appointments- West Region

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to appoint the uncontested conservation district supervisor appointments for the west region to their respective conservation districts (Elijah Christian- Jefferson County Conservation District, David Vliet, Kitsap Conservation District, Jason Ragan- Mason Conservation District, Palouse Conservation District, Dean Wesen- Skagit Conservation District, Mark Craven- Snohomish Conservation District, Betsie DeWreede- Thurston Conservation District, Sheryl Hagen-Zakarison, Palouse Conservation District, Marshall Stowe-Wahkiakum Conservation District). Seconded by Commissioner Cochran. Motion carried.

Clallam Conservation District Supervisor Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to appoint Nicole Rasmussen to the Clallam Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion carried.

Pierce Conservation District Supervisor Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve the appointment of Mark Mauren to the Pierce Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Seconded by Commissioner Cochran. Motion carried.

Conservation District Supervisor Appointments- Central Region

Motion by Commissioner Crose to approve the uncontested conservation district supervisor appointments for the central region (Kurt Hosman, Cascadia Conservation District, Kelsey Tanneberg- Foster Creek, William Boyum, Kittitas County Conservation District, Richard (Scott) Moore, Franklin Conservation District, Lorah Super, Okanogan Conservation District, Justin Grillo, South Douglas CD). Seconded by Commissioner Longrie. Motion Carried.

Conservation District Supervisor Appointments- Eastern Region

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve all the uncontested conservation district supervisor appointments for the east region (Chris Laney, Grant County Conservation District Board of Supervisors, Jeffrey Pittman Pine Creek CD, Beau Blachly, Pomeroy CD, Gerald Scheele, Spokane CD, Connie Bergstrom, Stevens County, Jeffrey Schulke, Walla Walla CD). Seconded by Commissioner Beale. Motion carried.

2022 Conservation District Elections

Motion by Commissioner Crose to certify and announce the official winners of 44 of the 45 conservation district elections. *The list of the conservation district results can be found on [page 64](#).* Seconded by Commissioner Longrie. Motion carried.

Public Comment (please see “Attachment B”)

Jean Mendoza provided public comment and submitted the comment in writing for the record.

Policy & Programs

Farmland Protection and Land Access Draft Guidelines

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve the Commission authorizing Director Pettit to approve the dissemination of the first draft of the Farmland Protection and Land Access guidelines to conservation districts, land trusts, and other stakeholders for a 30-day review process. Seconded by Commissioner Mumford. Commissioner Rentz abstained. Motion carried.

Sustainable Farms and Fields Draft Programmatic Guidelines

Motion by Commissioner Crose to approve the adoption of the final draft of the SFF programmatic guidelines listed on [pages 84-129](#) in the May 19, 2022 Commission meeting packet. SCC staff will revisit and adjust guidelines as needed after this first year of implementing the new program. Seconded by Commissioner Longrie. Commissioner Rentz abstained.

Disaster Assistance Program

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the Disaster Assistance Program Guidelines as outlined through June 30, 2022 and into the next fiscal year, and to allow staff to begin the rule-making process through the end of the next fiscal year. Seconded by Commissioner Longrie. Motion carried.

Fiscal Year 2023 Allocations

Motion by Commissioner Crose to approve the funding proposal found on [page 67 and 68](#) of the May 19, 2022 Conservation Commission meeting packet listing specific award amounts for the following grant programs in the attached table listed on page 69. Seconded by Commissioner Cochran. Motion carried.

Supplemental Allocations

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve the supplemental capital and operating funding allocation proposals as described on [pages 70 and 71](#) of the May 19, 2022 Commission meeting packet. Seconded by Commissioner Spaeth. Commissioner Rentz abstained. Motion carried.

WA Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) and the WA State Conservation Commission (SCC) Agreement

Motion by Commissioner Crose to approve SCC Executive Director, Chris Pettit to work with WACD Executive Director Tom Salzer to develop and enter into a contract up to \$100,000 for fiscal year 23. The tasks would include support for the annual meeting in December, preparation for fly-in meeting in concert with NACD and supervisor development and other smaller tasks as identified. Seconded by Commissioner Cochran. Commissioners Rentz and Mumford abstained.

Chairman Williams adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

Attendees online:

Alan	Chapman
Allisa	Carlson
Angie	Reseland
Anna	Lael
Bill	Eller
Bill	Blake
Brian	Cochrane
Craig	Nelson
Dave	Hedrick
Don	Gourlie
Doug	Rushton
Evan	Bauder
Jean	Mendoza
Jean	Fike
Jeff	Cunningham
Jim	Kropf
Karla	Heinitz
Kim	Williams
Loren	Meagher
Lorenzo	Churape
Mark	Nielson
Mike	Kuttel Jr.
Nick	Vira
Ryan	Williams
Stuart	Crane
Terra	Rentz
Tom	Salzer

Attendees in-person:

Dan	Roseburg
Dave	Stadelman
Dave	Marcell
Jeff	Schibel
Jerry	Scheele
Kristina	Ribellia
Mike	Nordin
Richard	Leitz
Rod	Snyder
Vicki	Carter

May 19, 2022 Public comment submitted by Jean Mendoza:

I want to address some observations that SCC staff made regarding public engagement.

Many of you, if not most, are paid to be here. I am not. I take time from my busy life year after year and try to figure out a way to make an impression on the WA State Conservation Commission. So far, I have failed. So today I will just speak from the heart and let the chips fall where they may.

Yesterday several people talked about trust. The consensus was that the SCC is a group of dedicated, honest conservationists. I don't doubt that you believe this, and I agree that this self-confidence is essential for a group such as the SCC to flourish.

But . . . a group that truly wants to secure public trust analyzes criticism and challenges alongside the positives. This is called SWOT analysis for Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats. In the spirit of SWOT analysis let me ask you to hear the perspective of one person who does not trust the SCC. Ask yourselves whether there is room for improvement.

I come from the Lower Yakima Valley served by the South Yakima Conservation District (SYCD). The Lower Yakima River is seriously impaired, and salmon must travel hundreds of miles through polluted waters. The South Yakima Conservation District spends a few hundred dollars a year talking to school children about salmon and then congratulates itself. The SYCD spends most of its time servicing concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). CAFOs are not sustainable. CAFOs make money for out of area investors who do not care about the environment because environmental costs don't figure into their bottom line.

Several years ago, the Director for the SYCD told a work group for the Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Management Area (LYV GWMA) that it is acceptable to compost cow manure on bare ground. The SYCD stated that the heavy equipment involved would compact the ground and prevent leaching of manure pollutants to the aquifers. A LYV GWMA study showed that this is not true, but the SYCD maintains this position.

I contacted the SCC and complained about this erroneous advice. The SCC replied that local conservation districts are independent entities, and the SCC cannot tell the CDs how to operate. In my opinion, the SCC failure to defend the science and the SYCD's willingness to protect and encourage pollution does severe damage to the SCC reputation and to SCC efforts to secure and maintain public trust.

Thank you for listening.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members

FROM: Christopher Pettit
SCC Executive Director

SUBJECT: Out of State Approval for Executive Director

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

The Executive Director of the State Conservation Commission must seek approval by the Commission to attend out-of-state meetings and conferences. To ensure registrations and logistics are coordinated in a timely manner, the director requests to attend the following:

September 8-11, 2022: National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Pacific and Southwest Joint Regional Conference
Maui, Hawaii

Requested Action:

Approval for the Executive Director to attend the NACD Pacific and Southwest Joint Regional Conference in Maui, Hawaii, September 8-11, 2022.

Staff Contact:

Christopher Pettit, cpettit@scc.wa.gov
Lori Gonzalez, lgonzalez@scc.wa.gov

2022 NACD PACIFIC AND SOUTHWEST REGIONAL CONFERENCE
ROYAL LAHAINA RESORT, MAUI, HAWAII
SEPTEMBER 8 – 11, 2022





National Association of
Conservation Districts

2022 NACD PACIFIC AND SOUTHWEST JOINT REGION MEETING

ROYAL LAHAINA RESORT
MAUI, HAWAII
SEPTEMBER 8-11, 2022



Meeting Highlights:

Field Tours showcasing Maui's
unique environment and
conservation activities

Networking and learning
opportunities

Hawaii cultural activities

Contacts:

Mae Nakahata

NACD Board Member—Hawaii
mnakahata@gmail.com

Ariel Rivers

NACD Pacific Region Rep
Ariel-Rivers@nacdnetwork.org

Rachel Theler

NACD Southwest Region Rep
Rachel-Theler@nacdnetwork.org



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Brian Cochrane, Habitat and Monitoring Coordinator

SUBJECT: Request to include 3.37 miles of Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Eligible Streams in East Klickitat Conservation District (Alder Creek).

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

The SCC CREP has received a request from East Klickitat Conservation District staff to add approximately 3.37 miles of Alder Creek in eastern Klickitat County to the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) map of eligible streams. We recommend that the Conservation Commission approve their request. Map of segments is provided at Exhibit A.

Requested Action:

Approve designation of eligible stream segments for CREP on 3.37 stream miles of Alder Creek in East Klickitat CD per maps at Exhibit A.

Staff Contact:

Brian Cochrane, 360-701-5749, bcochrane@scc.wa.gov

Background and Discussion:

The CREP in Washington has designated stream segments so that participants and practices are in places that achieve the goal of the program: to decrease some of the impacts of agriculture on listed species of anadromous salmon and steelhead. Other practices may be installed in tributaries and hydrologically connected wetlands of the identified streams. SCC may identify up to 10,000 miles of stream for installation of riparian forest buffers; currently 9,636.42 miles are eligible. A process for identifying new segments is identified in the FSA: State agreement (Exhibit B). East Klickitat CD staff have submitted documentation from the local FSA County Committee, local tribes, and WDFW staff that habitat is limiting and CREP enrollment of adjacent lands would be beneficial, in accordance with the process (Exhibit B).

One landowner along Alder Creek has expressed interest in CREP, which would result in 40.8 acres buffered along the 3.37 mile reach. Alder Creek is known to support spawning use by ESA listed steelhead, however, lack of riparian habitat is a limiting factor for fish in this creek.

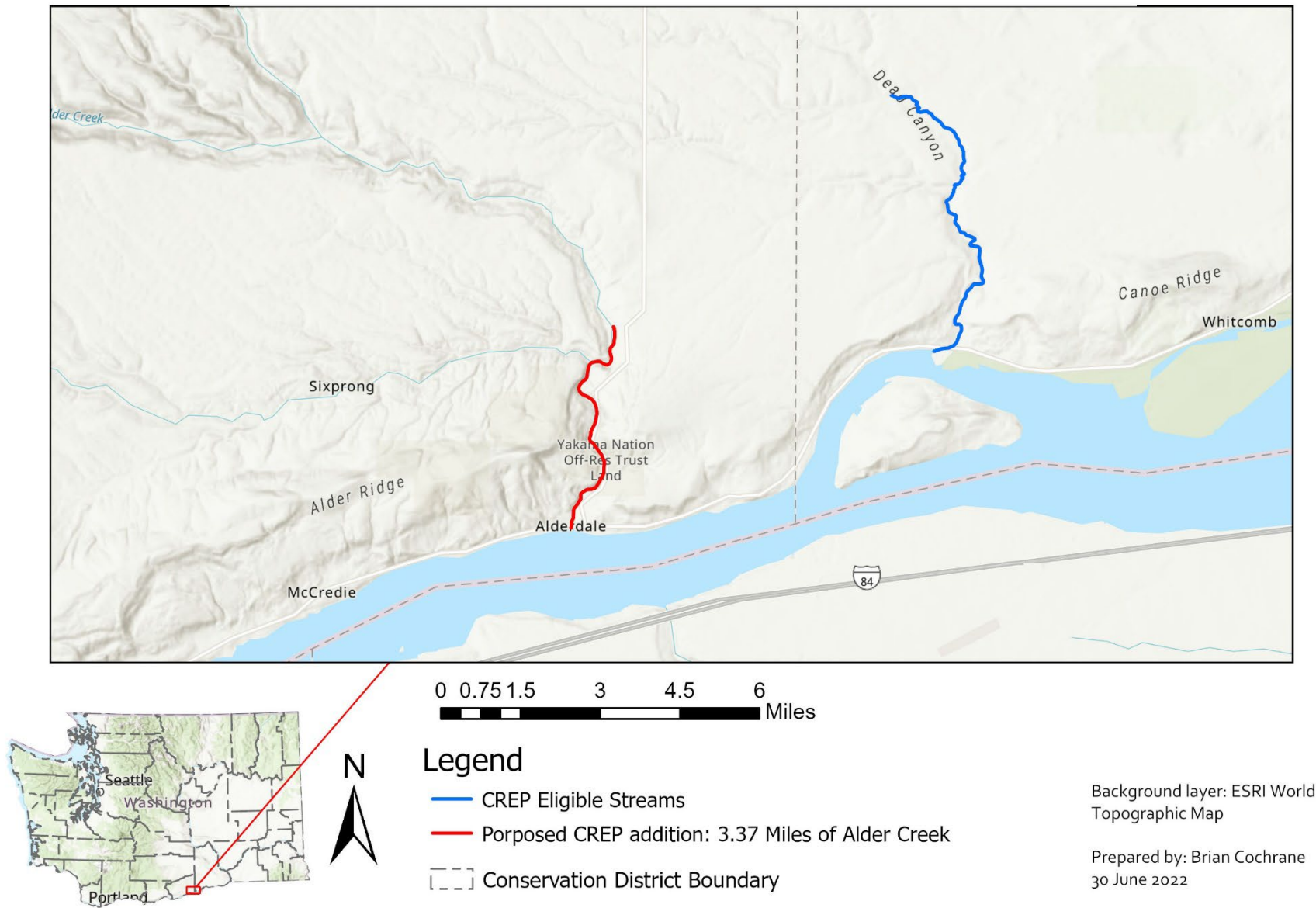
Recommended Action and Options:

Approve designation of eligible stream segments for CREP on 3.37 stream miles of Alder Creek in East Klickitat CD per maps at Exhibit A.

Exhibit A. Map of proposed stream addition.



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
Proposed Stream Addition
East Klickitat Conservation District



Washington State Conservation Commission provides this map for informational purposes only. Every effort to ensure this map is free of errors, but it should not be relied upon for any purpose other than general information. Washington State Conservation Commission provides this map without any warranty of any kind whatsoever, either express or implied, including but not limited to any implied warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose.

Exhibit B. Process for adding stream miles.

Designation of Eligible Stream Segments for CREP Eligibility

B Nominating Stream Segments for Approval

The following actions must be taken to nominate a stream segment which is currently not approved.

Step 1: The Conservation District should consult with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) regional offices and each of the affected Tribes. Representatives from WDFW and the Tribes, along with other fisheries experts, can provide guidance on where a

lack of riparian habitat is a limiting factor salmon and steelhead. FSA and NRCS should be consulted also, particularly to confirm if there is agricultural land in the area.

Step 2: Stream segments not currently designated for CREP, where there is a salmonid presence, or a high potential for presence, can be identify for possible nomination for CREP. The intent of the Washington CREP is to address ESA salmonids listings, and potential salmonids listings, on agriculture. Stream designations should be limited to streams where a significant portion of the lands along the stream are agricultural lands that meet basic CRP eligibility criteria.

Step 3: Using the criteria in subparagraph A, the parties consulted in step 1 should identify those stream segments where riparian habitat is a significant limiting factor for salmonids.

Step 4: Develop a written justification for each nominated stream segment, identifying the criteria from subparagraph A used, those features of the current riparian habitats that are limiting for salmonids and the likelihood of enrollment.

Step 5: Obtain the concurrence of the designation from the FSA County Committee.

Step 6: Submit the designated stream segments, along with the justification, and an indication of the County Committee concurrence, to the Conservation Commission.

Step 7: The Washington CREP Coordinator will submit the nominations to the Conservation Commission and FSA State Committee for approval or disapproval. Because the CREP Agreement limits total eligible stream miles to 10,000 miles, nominations for additional stream segments will generally only be acted on once each year. Nominations must be submitted to the Conservation Commission no later than October 31, and approvals or disapprovals will be issued no later by December 31.

Step 8: Approved stream segments will be added to the GIS data base by the Conservation Commission, with a copy provided to the FSA GIS Specialist for distribution to Service Center servers.

Exhibit C. FSA County Committee, tribal and WDFW concurrence re: Alder Creek salmon use and habitat.



United States Dept.
of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency

KLICKITAT COUNTY FSA
1107 SOUTH COLUMBUS AVE
GOLDENDALE WA 98620
(509) 773-5822
6/30/2022

Loren Meagher, P.E.
Central Klickitat Conservation District
Eastern Klickitat Conservation District
1107 S. Columbus Ave.
Goldendale, WA 98620

Loren:

I have discussed the designation of Alder Creek as a CREP stream with the Klickitat County FSA Committee.

The Committee does see the benefits of CREP and is in favor of completing CREP projects in Klickitat County. These projects do achieve substantial benefits.

The Committee questioned the negative impacts this might have on other landowners further upstream from the CREP designation. They contacted both you and I to get their questions and concerns answered prior to making their decision.

After discussion, the County Committee is supporting your proposal to include Alder Creek as a CREP stream. This office is willing to help with this project in any way possible.

Klickitat County FSA County Committee
Karl Amidon, Chairperson
By: Betty Fahlenkamp
County Executive Director

From: [Gary James](#)
To: [Loren Meagher](#)
Cc: [Audie Huber](#); [Colleen Fagan](#)
Subject: RE: Request for letter of support to designate Alder Creek as CREP eligible
Date: Friday, April 22, 2022 9:23:46 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Due to multiple other project priorities time constraints I am hoping that this e-mail response will suffice for documentation of CTUIR support for the proposed Alder Creek CREP designation and stream habitat enhancement projects that are expected to follow. In the recent 2020 Columbia Basin Partnership Task Force Phase 2 Report, degraded tributary habitat conditions are identified as the top limiting factor for Mid-Columbia steelhead. CTUIR is actively involved in steelhead restoration efforts in the Umatilla and Walla Walla basins. CTUIR supports efforts to improve steelhead habitat in Alder Creek as this will also help to rebuild the Umatilla Major Population Group (MPG) as designated by NOAA. Thanks, GJames





Confederated Tribes and Bands
of the Yakama Nation

Established by the
Treaty of June 9, 1855

May 3, 2022

RE: Letter of Support to designate Alder Creek as an eligible stream for the Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

To Whom it May Concern:

The Yakama Nation is pleased to support the Eastern Klickitat Conservation District's request that Alder Creek be designated as an eligible stream for the Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Alder Creek is located within the Southern Territories of the Yakama Nation, lands ceded in the Treaty of 1855 where tribal members retain treaty rights to hunt, fish, and gather. Alder Creek is also an important spawning location for the ESA listed Middle Columbia River Steelhead population and supports culturally significant resident fish species such as resident rainbow trout and bridgelip suckers.

Riparian function and habitat productivity have been identified by the WRIA 31 Limiting Factors analysis as one of the major limiting factors in the region for fish. Throughout WRIA 31, in which Alder Creek is located, riparian habitat has been negatively impacted by cattle use. Grazing by cattle within the riparian zone has caused increased channel incision, erosion, and poor water quality.

The CREP designation of Alder Creek will provide important riparian protections to the creek by excluding cattle. The CREP designation could also allow for future projects to improve riparian condition and function in Alder Creek such as riparian planting.

The Yakama Nation shares the goal of the Conservation District to protect and enhance aquatic habitat.

If you wish to Contact me on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at Phil_Rigdon@yakama.com or at 509.865.5121.

Sincerely,

Philip Rigdon, DNR Superintendent
YAKAMA NATION

Yakama Nation, Post Office Box 151, Toppenish, WA 98948 (509) 865-5121

From: [Johnson, Amber M \(DFW\)](#)
To: [Loren Meagher](#); [Lee, Kessina \(DFW\)](#); [Glaser, Bryce G \(DFW\)](#)
Cc: [Gardner, Matthew D \(DFW\)](#); [Howe, David L \(DFW\)](#); [Nolan, Madeline \(DFW\)](#)
Subject: Alder Creek
Date: Wednesday, May 18, 2022 10:52:22 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Hello,

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) concurs that off-site watering, exclusion of livestock from riparian areas and riparian plantings would benefit steelhead recovery within the Alder Creek watershed. Steelhead usage has been limited in Alder Creek and was likely never a "major contributor" to the mid-Columbia River population. However, prior to cattle grazing, these tributaries were cumulatively much more significant when flow and temperature were much improved.

WDFW supports an Alder Creek CREP designation and any stream habitat enhancement projects that follow.

Thank you,

Amber

Amber Johnson
Habitat Biologist
Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
PO Box 484
White Salmon, WA 98672
Cell: 360-701-2738





Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Alicia McClendon, Administrative Assistant
Josh Giuntoli, Southwest Regional Manager

SUBJECT: Pacific Conservation District Mid-Term Supervisor Appointment

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

The SCC received one application for a mid-term appointment on the Pacific Conservation District Board of Supervisors.

The application was sent to all Commission members for their review prior to the July 21st business meeting. Commissioners and Commission staff followed the process adopted in March of 2018 to conduct a more comprehensive vetting of the applications received for Commission appointment, including conducting an interview with the candidate listed below and contacting references.

A recommendation for appointment will be given by the appropriate area elected commission member.

Conservation District Mid-Term Supervisor Application

Conservation District	Name of Applicant (s)	Area Commissioner
Pacific	1. James Rose	Dean Longrie

Requested Action:

After recommendation and discussion, members will appoint the applicant to the conservation district board, as appropriate.

Staff Contact:

Alicia McClendon, amcclendon@scc.wa.gov

Josh Giuntoli, jgiuntoli@scc.wa.gov



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Chris Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Bill Eller, VSP Coordinator, S.A.L.

SUBJECT: SCC Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and Continuity of Operations Plan 2022 update

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Background Summary:

As a state agency, the Conservation Commission (Commission) is required to have a comprehensive emergency management plan (CEMP) and continuity of government plan (COOP).¹

The CEMP/COOP attached to this memo accomplish both objectives in one document. It has been updated to reflect the Commission's current employees, as well as our new executive director.

Requested Action:

Approve the adoption of the CEMP/COOP.

Suggested Motion:

Move to approve the adoption of the 2022 CEMP/COOP.

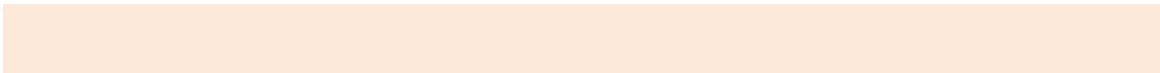
Staff Contact:

Bill Eller, beller@scc.wa.gov; 509-385-7512.

¹ See generally RCW 38.52.070 and WAC 118-30-60



Washington State Conservation Commission Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and Continuity of Operations Plan



Prepared by:
Bill Eller, Voluntary Stewardship Program Coordinator, SAL
Washington State Conservation Commission
(509) 385-7512 – beller@scc.wa.gov

Approved and Reviewed Annually by:
Chris Pettit, Executive Director

State of Washington
Washington State Conservation Commission
PO Box 47721, Olympia, WA 98504-7721
(360) 407-6200
<http://www.scc.wa.gov/>

July 22, 2022

TO: All Staff

FROM: Chris Pettit, Executive Director, Conservation Commission

SUBJECT: Letter of Promulgation – Washington State Conservation Commission Comprehensive Emergency Management and Continuity of Operations Plan

With this notice, I am pleased to officially promulgate the annual Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission) Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) and Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).

This is the framework for emergency preparedness, response and recovery activities throughout the Commission. The CEMP and COOP is also a guideline for how the Commission supports our conservation district clients before, during, and after an emergency. Our partnerships with conservation districts and other federal, state and local agencies are important to our efforts in improving our readiness as a state and as a natural resource conservation agency.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the CEMP and COOP is compatible with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Washington State Emergency Management Division (EMD), and Chapter 38.52 Revised Code of Washington. It specifies the authorities, functions, and responsibilities that pertain to establishing collaborative action plans between local, state, tribal, federal, volunteer, public, and private sector organizations. The CEMP and COOP will be updated on a continual basis to ensure compliance with applicable federal and state requirements.

Attachments

RECORD OF CHANGES

Change	Date Entered	Contents	Initials
1	10.23.13	Updated field office locations on page 5.	BE
2	10.23.13	Modified "categorization of disruptions" on pg 7 to designate a 2-6 month disruption in administering funds to be "high."	BE
3	10.23.13	Updated staff titles on pg 24 & 31.	BE
4	10.13.13	Updated staffs contact information on pg 37.	BE
5	1.8.14	Reviewed financial essential function with Debbie Becker and updated disruption level on pg 7 to "high."	BE
6	6.10.14	Reviewed and updated staff list on pg 37; reviewed entire document for updates.	BE
7	1.9.15	Reviewed and updated staff list on pg 37	BE
8	1.11.16	Reviewed and updated staff list on pg 37; reviewed entire document for updates.	BE
9	4.14.16	Reviewed and updated staff list on pg 37	BE
10	6.2.16	Reviewed and updated staff list on pg 37; reviewed entire document for updates.	BE
11	4.12.19	Reviewed and updated staff list on pg 37; reviewed entire document for updates.	BE
12	12.19.19	Reviewed entire document with all staff; reviewed and updated staff list on pg 37	BE
13	2.27.20	Reviewed entire document for updates; updated staffing list; added pandemic risk assessment	BE
14	8.4.20	Updated staffing list	BE
15	11.16.21	Updated staffing list	BE
16	12-8-21	Updated staffing list	BE
17	3.28.22	Updated staffing list; provided CEMP to new staff	BE
18	6.27.22	Updated staffing list; provided CEMP to new staff	BE

EXERCISES

Date	Attendees	Description	Initials
11.14.12	RM's, Megan Finkenbinder	CEMP/COOP TTX in Yakima	BE
10.22.13	RM's, Megan Finkenbinder, Debbie Becker	CEMP/COOP TTX in Yakima, with CEMP edits	BE
7.24.14	All staff	CEMP/COOP review and introduction for new staff, Lacey	BE
9.29.14	RM's	CEMP/COOP TTX in Yakima	BE
1.13.16	All staff	CEMP/COOP review	BE
12.11.17	All staff	CEMP/COOP review	BE
12.19.19	All staff	CEMP/COOP review – TTX in Lacey	BE
3.2.20	All staff	CEMP/COOP review – COVID-19 / pandemic	BE

Cross Reference Index
As required by WAC 118-30-060(4)

WAC 118-30-060(2) Operational Component	Section Cross-Reference with WSCC CEMP
(a) Direction, control and coordination	1(A-D), 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
(b) Continuity of Government	1(C-D, F-G), 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
(c) Emergency resource management	4, 5, 6, 7
(d) Warning	5, 6
(e) Emergency public information	4, 5, 6
(f) Response and recovery operation reports	6, 7, 8
(g) Movement (evacuation)	5, 6
(h) Shelter	4, 5, 6
(i) Human resources (manpower)	4, 5, 6, 7
(j) Mass care and individual assistance	4, 5, 6, 7
(k) Medical, health and mortuary	5, 6
(l) Communication	4, 5, 6, 7
(m) Food	4, 5, 6, 7
(n) Transportation	4, 5, 6, 7
(o) Radiological and technological protection	3 (B-D), 4, 5, 6, 7
(p) Law enforcement	3(D), 4, 5, 6, 7
(q) Fire protection	3(C-D), 4, 5, 6, 7
(r) Emergency engineering services	4, 5, 6, 7
(s) Search and rescue	4, 5, 6, 7
(t) Military support	4, 5, 6, 7
(u) Religious and volunteer agency affairs	5, 6
(v) Emergency administrative procedures	2, 4, 5, 6, 7
(w) Emergency fiscal procedures and records	2, 4, 5, 6, 7
(x) Training and education	8, 9, 10
(y) Energy and utilities	3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Contents

<i>Title Page.....</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Promulgation.....</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Record of Changes.....</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Cross Reference Index.....</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Table of Contents.....</i>	<i>v</i>
Section 1: Overview of Impacts, Risks, Recovery and Response	1
A – Purpose of this plan	1
B – Situations that may trigger this plan.....	1
C – Organization of the agency	1
D – Critical business functions	1
E – Risks.....	1
F – Recovery.....	2
G – Recovery coordinators.....	2
Section 2: Business Impact Analysis.....	3
A – Organization and law	3
B – Service areas	3
1 – The Commission is a service agency	3
2 – Services provided	3
3 – Staffing	4
4 – Interdependence.....	4
5 – Locations	4
C – Operational and financial impacts of disaster or disruption	5
1 – Budget	5
2 – Outage scenarios.....	5
3 – Loss of headquarters.....	5
4 – Loss of satellite operations	5
5 – Loss of governing board	5
D – Criticality of business functions.....	6
1 – Categorization of disruptions.....	6
2 – Certify elections and appoint supervisors	6
3 – Recommend funding and administer funds	6
4 – Review district operations and assist supervisors	7
Section 3: Risk, Threat, and Vulnerability Analysis	8
A – Natural hazards.....	9
1 – Earthquake	9
2 – Tsunami	9
3 – Tornado or windstorm	10
4 – Winter storm	10
5 – Flooding.....	10
6 – Landslide	10
7 – Volcanic eruption, glacial outbursts, and lahars.....	11

8 – Lightning.....	13
9 – Smoke, dirt, or dust.....	13
10 – Pandemic.....	13
B – Accidents.....	13
1 – Disclosure of confidential information	13
2 – Electrical disturbance or interruption.....	14
3 – Spill of toxic chemical.....	14
C – Environmental failure	15
1 – Water damage.....	15
2 – Structural failure	15
3 – Fire.....	16
4 – Hardware failure	16
5 – Liquid leakage.....	17
6 – Operator or user error	17
7 – Software error.....	17
8 – Telecommunications interruption	17
D – Intentional acts.....	18
1 – Alteration of data	18
2 – Alteration of software.....	18
3 – Computer virus.....	18
4 – Bomb threat	19
5 – Disclosure of confidential information	19
6 – Sabotage or terrorism	19
7 – Internet attacks.....	20
Section 4: Recovery Strategy.....	21
A – Priorities during recovery	21
B – Recovery requirements for critical business operations	21
1 – Certify elections and appoint supervisors	21
2 – Recommend funding and administer funds	21
3 – Review district operations and assist supervisors	22
C – Provisions for offsite storage of critical data	22
1 – Provisions for headquarters operations	22
2 – Provisions for satellite operations	22
D – Alternative processing strategies and facilities.....	22
1 – Command centers.....	22
2 – Alternate business operations	23
3 – Alternate data processing	24
4 – Alternate data communications	24
Section 5: Emergency Response and Problem Escalation	25
A – Emergency response protocol.....	25
1 – Disaster events.....	25
2 – Problems	26
B – Problem escalation protocol.....	27
Section 6: Plan Activation	28

A – First alert procedures.....	28
B – Problem and disaster confirmation procedures.....	28
1 – Human assets	28
2 – Infrastructure	28
3 – Reporting problems or disasters to management.....	29
4 – Emergency contacts	29
5 – Command center activation.....	29
6 – Recovery team notification.....	29
7 – Disaster declaration	29
8 – Informing others	29
Section 7: Recovery Operations	30
A – Recovery Flow.....	30
B – Recovery team organization	30
1 – IT expertise.....	30
2 – Programmatic expertise.....	30
3 – Business services/support.....	30
C – Recovery team plans.....	31
D – Primary site restoration or relocation	31
Section 8: Plan Validation/Testing	32
Section 9: Training	33
Section 10: Plan Maintenance.....	34
Section 11: Supporting Documentation	35
Appendix A: Contact Information.....	37

Section 1: Overview of Impacts, Risks, Recovery and Response

A – Purpose of this plan

The purpose of disaster recovery/business resumption planning is to assure continuity of business operations and systems needed to support critical agency functions. This disaster recovery and business resumption plan provides for a systematic and orderly resumption of all critical agency operations. This plan provides for restoring service quickly and methodically. Functions most critical to achieving the mission of the Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission) must remain in operation during the recovery period.

B – Situations that may trigger this plan

Two kinds of situation could initiate actions under this plan: disaster events, and problems. Disaster events often take the form of unforeseen events that cause damage or lengthy disruption of services or threaten to do so. Examples of disaster events include fire, flood, earthquake, and bombings. A problem may disrupt normal operations and escalate or continue, eventually creating a disruption as critical as a disaster.

C – Organization of the agency

The Commission is a small state agency organized under Title 89.08 Revised Code of Washington. A governing board of ten members employs 21 staff. Most employees are located in the agency headquarters in Lacey, Washington in the Department of Ecology facility. Several satellite offices are maintained, including offices in Okanogan, Spokane, and Yakima.

The Commission is a service agency, providing technical and financial assistance to conservation districts. Of the agency's approximate biennial budget of \$26 million, about 90 percent (\$22.5 million) went directly to 45 conservation districts to support local conservation programs and practices.

D – Critical business functions

Critical business functions that could be substantially impaired by the loss of facilities, systems, or people include:

- Certifying conservation district elections and appointing district board members.
- Recommending funding and administering state funds.
- Reviewing conservation district operations and assisting district board members.

E – Risks

Risk is a function of frequency, severity and duration. Risks most likely to cause substantial business disruption include:

- Earthquake (low frequency, high severity, high duration of disruption).

- Volcanic events (low frequency, medium severity, medium duration).
- Toxic chemical spills (low frequency, high severity, medium duration).
- Water damage (low frequency, medium severity, medium duration).
- Fire (low frequency, medium severity, medium duration).
- Computer infections (high frequency, medium severity, low duration).
- Intentional disclosure of confidential information (low frequency, medium severity, low duration).
- Sabotage or terrorism (low frequency, high severity, medium duration).
- Pandemic (low frequency, medium severity, medium duration).

F – Recovery

During recovery, the agency's first priority is to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees, governing board members, and anyone else who may be impacted by site conditions or recovery operations. State-owned assets and systems will be protected unless personal health or safety is jeopardized.

Most data and documents held by the Commission are recoverable from offsite backups and from other agencies, including source documents in conservation districts and contract information on file with the Office of Financial Management.

No command center is formally established in this plan. With a very small staff, the default action is for each employee to work from home or from local conservation district offices in the event of a disaster. In 2002 and 2003, the Commission implemented a distributed computing strategy by replacing desktop machines with laptop computers for most staff, so some computing resources will remain available in almost any emergency or disaster scenario.

G – Recovery coordinators

Primary and secondary recovery coordinators are designated in this plan. Primary recovery staff is located in western Washington and provide leadership and management in the event of a general, agency-wide disaster and in the case of an information technology disaster. Secondary recovery staff is located in eastern Washington and will take over if the primary staff is incapacitated or unavailable.

An Agency Recovery and Resumption Team (ARRT) is established in this plan.

Protocols for responding to disasters and problems that may evolve to become disasters are details in this plan. First alert procedures consist primarily of individual staff contacting any recovery coordinator or any ARRT member. Following confirmation of a problem or disaster, any of these individuals can declare a problem or disaster and activate this plan.

Specific information on recovering from IT-related problems and disasters is incorporated into the IT Security Plan.

This plan will be validated through tests performed annually. This plan is a living document that will be updated as needed.

Section 2: Business Impact Analysis

A – Organization and law

The Washington State Conservation Commission (the Commission) is a small agency consisting of ten governing board members and approximately 21 employees. The Commission was formed in 1939 through Title 89 Revised Code of Washington.

A ten-member governing board establishes policy for the Commission, certifies elections, approves budgets and plans, and supervises the Executive Director. Three members are elected to three-year terms by the Washington Association of Conservation Districts. Two members are appointed to four-year terms by the Governor of the State of Washington. Five members are ex officio and represent the Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington Department of Ecology, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington State University, and Washington Association of Conservation Districts.

B – Service areas

1 – The Commission is a service agency

The Commission primarily provides service to 45 local governmental entities called conservation districts formed by local action through the authority in RCW 89.08. These districts exist in every county of Washington State.

2 – Services provided

Services provided by the Commission consist primarily of technical and financial assistance to help local conservation districts in conserving the natural resources of the State of Washington.

Technical assistance includes, but is not limited to:

- Assisting conservation districts in resolving legal questions.
- Providing information and assistance in the development of local plans.
- Assisting in training staff and supervisors in effective business operations.
- Helping prepare for audits.
- Providing accounting and bookkeeping training.
- Certifying conservation district elections that comply with election procedures.
- Appointing local conservation district officials.

Financial assistance includes, but is not limited to:

- Providing financial support for local programs through grants to qualifying conservation districts.
- Covering the basic cost of required state audits.

3 – Staffing

Services are provided by 23 employees in four general categories:

- Administration.
- Projects.
- Grants and fiscal services.
- Field services.

Statutory duties for several functions are performed or supported by a variety of staff. These duties include:

- Rulemaking.
- Processing conservation district boundary changes, annexations, and de-annexations.
- Processing conservation district consolidations.
- Processing conservation district name changes.
- Certifying conservation district elections.
- Appointing conservation district board members.
- Managing public records and requests for such records.

Several project staff is focused on specific projects and programs, and generally are considered to be experts on these topics.

Five staff in our fiscal services division reviews and approve grant reimbursement requests, write grant contracts, review financial policies and procedures, and advise conservation district staff who handle financial matters.

Five staff in our field services division provides organizational support to conservation district governing boards and employees, including program planning, problem resolution, training, intervention, and facilitation.

4 – Interdependence

All categories of staff described above operate in an interdependent, coordinated fashion. *Ad hoc* teams form rapidly and dissolve as necessary as the agency strives to provide exemplary service to conservation districts, other agencies, and citizens of the State. Because of the interdependent nature of staff work, the Commission would be able to continue providing services in the event of an unexpected loss of a small number of employees.

5 – Locations

Administrative and fiscal services are centralized in the Commission's headquarters operation in the Department of Ecology building in Lacey, Washington. Project and field staffs are located in the Commission headquarters and in field offices located in Okanogan, Moses Lake, Spokane, and Yakima.

C – Operational and financial impacts of disaster or disruption

1 – Budget

The Commission had a total budget of about \$26 million 2019-2021 state biennium. Most of these funds were delivered by the Commission as grants to conservation districts for various local conservation programs and projects.

2 – Outage scenarios

The Commission's ability to provide continued service could be substantially impaired by a disaster, a severe and escalating problem, or by loss of services of a substantial number of governing board members or employees. In addition, potential financial losses or delays in processing grant contract payments could occur in those situations.

3 – Loss of headquarters

A total loss of our headquarters operation without loss of staff would mean loss of computing resources, data stores and files. This would disrupt the Commission's ability to process financial transactions. Loss of a significant number of employees would result in a disruption in providing grant reimbursements to conservation districts and failure to adequately support data entry systems required by the Office of Financial Management.

4 – Loss of satellite operations

Relatively little financial risk is presented by loss of any or all of our satellite offices. Operationally, the loss of one employee located in a satellite office would increase the workload on existing staff until the position could be filled, a process that normally takes two to six months. The loss of several employees would significantly increase workload on remaining staff, and some services to conservation districts would need to be "triaged" in order to meet the highest priority needs during recovery.

5 – Loss of governing board

The ability of the Commission to certify elections of conservation district board supervisors, appoint district supervisors, establish and revise policies, approve budgets, and supervise staff would be disrupted for a significant period of time if less than a quorum of the board members remained available following a disaster. As the Conservation Commission consists of a ten-member board and a quorum is defined in RCW 89.08.050 as a majority of the members, the loss of four or more members may suspend the ability of the Commission to operate until replacements are elected or appointed.

The ability of staff to continue administering existing grant contracts or commit the Commission to new contracts may be in question without a quorum of the governing board. Conceivably, this situation could last for six months or more.

D – Criticality of business functions

1 – Categorization of disruptions

The critical nature of business functions is categorized as low, medium or high depending on the nature of the functions and the duration of the disruption.

In the following prioritization matrix, the classification of major business functions as low, medium and high refer to the potential impact on customers and/or the State depending on different lengths of disruption.

Business Function	Length of disruption and resulting severity		
	1-2 months	2-6 months	+6 months
Certify elections and appoint supervisors	Low	Medium	High
Recommend funding and administer funds	High	High	High
Review district operations and assist supervisors	Medium	Medium	High

2 – Certify elections and appoint supervisors

The ability of local conservation districts to function depends on each maintaining an active governing board. The Commission has a duty to establish election procedures for conservation district elections, certify elections that follow these procedures, and appoint qualified individuals to serve as supervisors. The inability of the Commission to perform these functions for a short time would have little impact on the day-to-day business of conservation districts. Over a period of many months, however, this situation would become more debilitating to local conservation districts and their ability to serve the citizens of the State of Washington in conserving natural resources.

3 – Recommend funding and administer funds

The Commission's ability to prepare and submit a budget is important. A budget that provides sufficient support for agency operations and meaningful funding for conservation programs implemented locally across Washington State provides the financial energy to implement effective conservation programs. Should the Commission become unable to perform this function early in a biennium; little immediate impact will be felt by conservation districts. However, should this occur in the middle of a biennium or later, it could interrupt the provision of technical and financial resources to all conservation districts in Washington State for at least a biennium, causing local district programs to be cut back or curtailed, resulting in less protection of the State's natural resources.

Few conservation districts have sufficient cash reserves to continue operations for more than a few months if their cash flow is interrupted. If the Commission becomes unable to effectively administer grant contracts and associated funds, there would be an immediate impact on conservation districts. This impact would increase with time, quickly creating substantial cash-flow concerns in most conservation districts. Without the ability to continue the funding stream to conservation districts, the majority of conservation districts would lose most of their staff and

the ability to provide technical and financial services to conserve natural resources would be severely impaired. It is important to note that conservation districts are the only non-regulatory local government entities authorized to work with landowners to implement conservation practices on private lands. Service to those citizens that directly control natural resources on private lands is critical to achieving maximum beneficial uses of water and other resources.

Technical staff in conservation districts have specialized skill sets not easily obtained from most rural communities.

4 – Review district operations and assist supervisors

Non-financial services are provided directly to conservation districts by field staff. The primary focus of field staff is helping conservation districts be more successful and more accountable. There would be little immediate impact on conservation district operations in the event of a short disruption in the Commission's ability to provide on-site services to conservation districts. We know from experience, however, that the number and severity of district operational issues increase as the amount of time increases without significant field support to conservation districts. This is often evidenced by audit findings which seem to be more common in areas where service disruptions have occurred. We have also seen a higher incidence of adverse personnel actions where field support has been lacking. Over a period of many months, the loss of on-site services provided by the Commission to conservation districts would severely impair local effectiveness in conserving the State's natural resources.

Section 3: Risk, Threat, and Vulnerability Analysis

Risk is a function of frequency, severity and duration. Risks, threats and vulnerabilities of the Commission are assessed based on the impact of potential frequency, severity, and duration of events on Commission operations. Events that occur rarely have a low frequency of occurrence. Events that are unlikely to substantially disrupt agency operations have a low severity. Events that may disrupt operations for less than a month have a low duration. Medium duration is more than one month and less than four months. High duration is more than four months. The following table summarizes risk, frequency and severity for events covered in this section.

Type of event	Risk	Frequency	Severity	Duration
3.1 Natural Hazards				
3.1.1 Earthquake	High	Low	High	High
3.1.2 Tsunami	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.1.3 Tornado or windstorm	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.1.4 Winter Storm	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
3.1.5 Flooding	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.1.6 Landslide	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.1.7 Volcano-related events	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
3.1.8 Lightning	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.1.9 Smoke, dirt, dust	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.1.10 Pandemic	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
3.2 Accidents				
3.2.1 Disclose confidential information	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.2.2 Electrical disturbance, interruption	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.2.3 Toxic chemical spill	Medium	Low	High	Medium
3.3 Environmental Failure				
3.3.1 Water damage	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
3.3.2 Structural failure	High	Low	High	High
3.3.3 Fire	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
3.3.4 Hardware failure	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.3.5 Liquid leakage	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.3.6 Operator or user error	Low	Medium	Low	Low
3.3.7 Software error	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.3.8 Telecommunications interruption	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.4 Intentional Acts				
3.4.1 Alteration of data	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.4.2 Alteration of software	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.4.3 Computer virus	Medium	High	Medium	Low
3.4.4 Bomb threat	Low	Low	Low	Low
3.4.5 Disclose confidential information	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
3.4.6 Sabotage or terrorism	Medium	Low	High	Medium
3.4.7 Internet attacks	Low	Medium	Low	Low

A – Natural hazards

1 – Earthquake

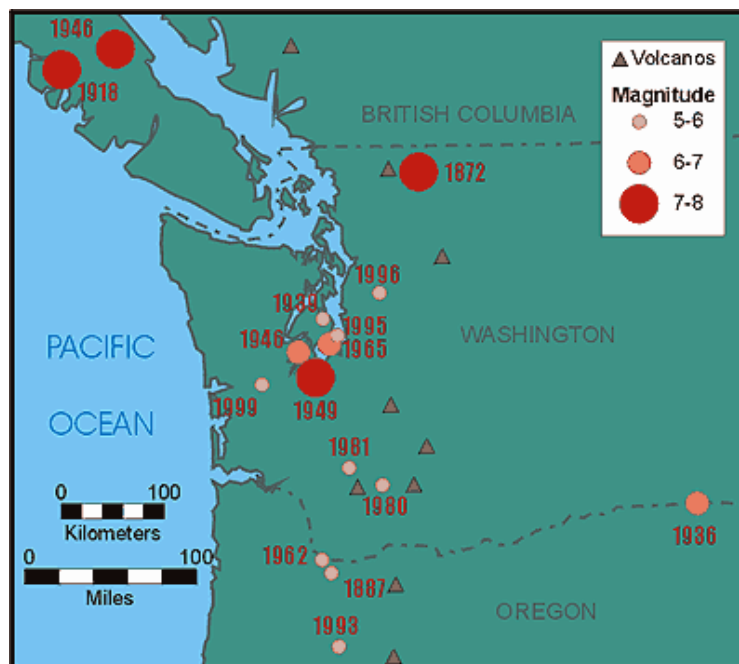
The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations by earthquake events is high. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is high, and duration is potentially high.

Being located adjacent to the Cascade Mountains and significant seismically active faults, our headquarters in Lacey, Washington is at risk from significant seismic events. The February 28, 2001 Nisqually earthquake registered a Richter magnitude of 6.8 with an epicenter 52 kilometers deep and about 16.7 kilometers northeast of Olympia, Washington. This earthquake caused cosmetic damage to some ceilings and walls in the Lacey headquarters building.

Business operations of the Commission are unlikely to be substantially disrupted if seismic events damage satellite field offices.

Seattle-area significant earthquakes:

Year	Mag	Depth	Location	Damage
1949	7.1	53 km	Olympia	Map and Details
1965	6.5	63 km	Sea-Tac	Details
1999	5.5-5.8	41 km	Satsop	PNSN Event Info Damage - EQE
2001	6.8	52 km	Olympia (Nisqually)	PNSN Event Info Damage - Nisqually Clearinghouse
2001	5.0	40 km	Matlock	PNSN Event Info



2 – Tsunami

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations from tsunami events is low. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

The coastal regions of Washington State are at risk from tsunamis. These destructive waves can be caused by coastal or submarine (underwater) landslides or volcanism, but they are most commonly caused by large submarine earthquakes. Tsunamis formed offshore may strike adjacent shorelines within minutes, or may cross the ocean at speeds as great as 600 miles per hour to strike distant shores. In 1946, a tsunami was initiated by an earthquake in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska; in less than 5 hours, it reached Hawaii with waves as high as 55 feet and killed 173 people (<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/geology/hazards/tsunami.htm>).

While the Commission has no permanent operations in tsunami-prone areas, staff serving western Washington conservation districts frequently travel in such areas.

3 – Tornado or windstorm

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations from tornados is very low. Frequency of such events is very low, potential severity is very low, and duration is low. Windstorms are more frequent but rarely result in more than a few hours of business disruption.

Washington ranks 43rd out of 50 states in tornado frequency with an average of one per year (<http://www.disastercenter.com/washingt/tornado.html>).

4 – Winter storm

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to a winter storm is medium. Frequency of such events near Commission offices is low, potential severity is medium, and duration is low.

Winter storms are unlikely to pose significant hazards to people or equipment in western Washington, except in areas proximal to hills or mountains. Such areas are rarely occupied by Commission members or staff.

Winter storms are somewhat more common in eastern Washington. In this region, risk is primarily associated with loss of adequate visibility while traveling and slick roads. Commission field staff is equipped with survival equipment and emergency supplies.

5 – Flooding

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations from flooding events is low. Frequency of such events at or near agency operations is low, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

No Commission operations occur in areas prone to flooding. However, agency members and staff sometimes travel through flood-prone areas, placing people and equipment at risk.

6 – Landslide

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations by landslide events is low. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

Commission members and staff frequently travel in mountainous regions of Washington State. Given the large amount of precipitation in western Washington and rapid snowmelt events and rainstorms in eastern Washington, travelers may encounter mudslides or landslides at any time.

Travelers are encouraged to carry emergency gear, a cellular phone and a state road map at all times.

7 – Volcanic eruption, glacial outbursts, and lahars

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations by volcano-related events is medium. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity of impacts on Commission operations is medium, and duration may be medium.

Volcanoes and related hazards pose a major risk to Commission business operations. Travelers are especially vulnerable to ash falls, glacial outbursts, and other volcano-induced hazards. Roads and bridges crossing drainages originating on the flanks of volcanoes are subject to damage or blockage from volcanic events. Agency field offices in eastern Washington may be impacted by ash from volcanic eruptions in the Cascade Mountains.

Volcanoes

Washington is home to five major composite volcanoes or strato-volcanoes: Mount Baker, Glacier Peak, Mount Rainier, Mount St. Helens, and Mount Adams.



More than 200 eruptions of Cascade Range volcanoes in Washington, Oregon and California have occurred over the past 12,000 years. These volcanoes have generated tephra (ejected material), lava flows, lahars (volcanic debris flows), and debris avalanches. Some enormous debris avalanches and lahars may have been caused by intrusions of magma (not eruptions) or steam explosions at the volcanoes, or by local or regional earthquakes.

All Washington volcanoes except Mount Adams have erupted within the last 250 years. Volcanoes do not erupt at regular intervals, making it difficult to forecast when a given volcano might erupt again. Although risks from volcanoes are significantly lower than risks from earthquakes and landslides, the relatively long recurrence interval for volcanic hazards (decades to several centuries) combined with their great potential for destruction make them particularly insidious (<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/geology/hazards/volcano/#pubs>).

Volcano	Eruption type(s)	Eruptions in past 200 yrs	Latest activity (year A.D.)	Remarks about activity of the last 10,000 years
Mount Baker	ash, lava	1?	mid-1800s; 1870?; 1975 steam emission	Debris avalanches and lahars have flowed down the Nooksack, Baker, and Skagit Rivers
Glacier Peak	ash	1+?	before 1800	Lahars have extended more than 60 mi (100 km) down the Skagit River; pyroclastic flows produced several times
Mount Rainier	ash, lava	1?	X tephra between 1820-1854	Enormous debris avalanches and lahars flowed down the White, Puyallup, and Nisqually Rivers; smaller lahars in the Cowlitz basin; continued seismic activity
Mount St. Helens	ash, lava, dome	2 major eruptive periods	1980-present	History of explosive eruptions and lahars
Indian Heaven volcanic field	lava, scoria	none	8,000 yr ago?	Consists of seven minor shield volcanoes that have each erupted only once (?)
Mount Adams	lava, ash	none	3,500 yr ago	Lahars
Mount Hood, Oregon	ash, dome	2+?	1865; major eruption in the late 1700s	Lahars down the Sandy and Hood Rivers; modern glacial outburst floods; seismic swarms continue

Glacial outbursts

A glacial outburst flood is a hydrological phenomenon that refers to the sudden release of water stored in glaciers. Around Mount Rainier, these floods are a serious threat to the river valleys and could create flooding greater than may be caused by an extreme meteorological event such as a 100-year flood. Glacial outburst flooding is one of the greatest hazards associated with Mount Rainier.

Mudflows and lahars

Mudflows or debris flows composed mostly of volcanic materials on the flanks of a volcano are called lahars. These flows of mud, rock, and water can rush down valleys and stream channels at speeds of 20 to 40 miles per hour and can travel more than 50 miles. Some lahars contain so much rock debris (60 to 90% by weight) that they look like fast-moving rivers of wet concrete. Close to their source, these flows are powerful enough to rip up and carry trees, houses, and huge boulders miles downstream. Farther downstream they entomb everything in their path in mud.

Historically, lahars have been one of the deadliest volcano hazards. They can occur both during an eruption and when a volcano is quiet. The water that creates lahars can come from melting snow and ice (especially water from a glacier melted by a pyroclastic flow or surge), intense rainfall, or the breakout of a summit crater lake. Large lahars are a potential hazard to many communities downstream from glacier-clad volcanoes, such as Mount Rainier.

8 – Lightning

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations by lightning strike is low. Frequency of such events is relatively low, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

Washington State experiences one of the lowest densities of lightning strike in the conterminous United States. Nevertheless, lightning strikes can disrupt electrical power, damage traffic control systems, spark wildfires, damage electrical equipment, and cause fires in buildings.

All offices are at risk for disruption of electrical power and damage to electrical equipment.

Surge suppressors should be used on all sensitive electrical devices, including computers, printers, routers/switches, firewall devices, and telephones. When not in use, such devices may be unplugged to prevent damage from electrical surges.

9 – Smoke, dirt, or dust

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to smoke, dirt or dust is low. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

Smoke, dirt, and dust may occur anywhere fire or land disturbance is underway, including grass and forest fires, intentional burning, debris flows and landslides, windstorms, agricultural activities, road construction, and demolition.

Generally, hazards consist of reduced visibility and health impairment due to inhalation. Damage to eyes may also result from chemical reactions from smoke or from airborne grit.

Commission members and staff are primarily at risk from smoke, dirt, and dust when traveling. Portable electronic equipment should not be operated in such conditions.

10 – Pandemic

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to a pandemic is medium. Frequency of such an event is low, but potential severity is medium, and duration is medium.

A pandemic may occur anywhere in the world, and the interconnectivity and ease of national and international travel increases risk.

Generally, hazards consist of health impairment, quarantine and medical complications. Employees may be unable to work in an office setting, may require extensive time off for recovery and treatment, and replacement workers may not be available.

Decontamination and personal protective protocols should occur both at employee's homes and office settings.

B – Accidents

1 – Disclosure of confidential information

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to accidental disclosure of confidential information is low. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

Unintentional disclosure of confidential information may result in legal actions that disrupt the normal flow of Commission business operations. Four types of confidential information may be present: private information about employees, social security numbers, documents protected by attorney-client privilege, and information about possible/pending legal actions in conservation districts.

Confidential information held by the Commission includes some instances of social security numbers on documents submitted by conservation districts, and documents and records pertaining to Commission members and staff on file in our headquarters facility. These records are not critical to continuation of Commission business operations.

All staff has been instructed that social security numbers may not be released. All public disclosure requests are approved by the Executive Director. It is unlikely the agency would accidentally release confidential information from records it maintains.

Attorney-client privileged information is not subject to release under the Public Disclosure Act, but the information is discoverable by court order. All staff is frequently instructed to not release documents that may be attorney-client privileged without prior approval from the WSCC Executive Director.

Commission field staff is often privy to sensitive personnel situations and possible/pending legal actions in conservation districts. Such information is rarely documented in writing, but accidental disclosure is possible. Commission staff often consults with team members about the best approach to assist conservation districts in resolving such situations. All field staff has received specialized training through the Department of Personnel to prevent/reduce losses due to poorly handled personnel issues.

2 – Electrical disturbance or interruption

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to electrical disturbance or interruption is low. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

All regions in Washington State are subject to electrical disturbance through brownouts, blackouts, and power surges. Causes may be localized or regional in nature.

All offices are at risk for damage to electrical equipment from electrical disturbance or interruption.

Surge suppressors should be used on all sensitive electrical devices, including computers, printers, routers/switches, firewall devices, and telephones. When not in use, such devices may be unplugged to prevent damage from electrical surges.

Important computer systems should also be protected by power-conditioning uninterruptible power supplies to cover under-voltage, overvoltage and surge conditions. Web servers and network servers should be protected by uninterruptible power supplies.

3 – Spill of toxic chemical

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations by toxic chemical spills is medium. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity may be high, and duration may be medium.

Most Commission offices have little direct risk from toxic chemical spills. However, the headquarters office in Lacey may be impacted by odors or vapors transmitted via the heating

and cooling system ducts. Although the nearest railroad is several miles away, Interstate 5 is less than ½-mile distant, so a major accident with a resulting chemical spill could impact headquarters staff. Similarly, Martin Way is less than 1/8-mile distant and tractor-trailer rigs commonly use this route. Usually, the Lacey facility has only one ingress/egress point for motorized traffic. In the event of a disaster, Saint Martin's College may allow temporary traffic ingress/egress through their campus.

Several of our satellite offices could be impacted by a chemical spill:

- The Colfax field office is less than one-half mile from US Highway 195 and a regional rail line.
- The Longview field office is adjacent to State Highway 4.
- The Okanogan field office is near US Highway 97 and a regional rail line.
- The Spokane field office is less than one-half mile from Interstate 90 and several major rail lines.
- The Yakima office is approximately two miles from Interstate 82 and a major rail line.

C – Environmental failure

1 – Water damage

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations from water damage is medium. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is medium, and duration is medium.

No Commission offices are sited within the 100-year flood zone. Commission headquarters are located on the ground floor of a three-story building with a flat roof. Water damage is unlikely due to roof leaks since such leaks would be detected in the top two floors before impacting the Commission work space. However, water damage would occur if the fire suppression sprinklers were activated.

Commission staff should reduce the potential for water damage to computers by locating them under desks and under shelves whenever possible. Turning electrical equipment off when unattended may help reduce water-caused damage to electrical circuits.

2 – Structural failure

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to structural failure is medium. While frequency of such events is low, potential severity is high, and duration may be high.

Catastrophic failure of the Lacey facility housing our headquarters operation is unlikely unless a major seismic event occurred. If the facility is occupied during collapse, relatively few Commission staff is likely to survive, resulting in the loss of experienced, knowledgeable staff. If the facility is severely damaged, computers and associated data stores would be damaged or destroyed.

Partial collapse of the facility may cause relatively few injuries, may restrict ingress/egress, or may damage some computing assets.

Data should be backed up regularly and stored offsite to reduce business disruption in the event of a catastrophic failure of the Commission headquarters facility. Software licenses and proof of

purchase should be photocopied or scanned and stored offsite. Backup copies of significant software should be stored offsite.

3 – Fire

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to fire is medium. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is medium, and duration is medium.

Automatic fire detection and suppression systems are present in the Lacey headquarters building. These systems are regularly inspected and tested, and fire drills are initiated several times a year to ensure that all staff knows proper building exit procedures.

The greatest risk in the Lacey headquarters due to fire is likely to be smoke and water damage. Automatic systems and rapid response by local fire departments will help to keep fire damage localized within the building.

Electrical connections in the building may pose the greatest risk of accidental fire. Lack of tidiness in some office cubicles, combined with the proliferation of small electrical devices plugged into multiple outlet strips and surge protectors, raise the potential risk of accidental fire.

All Commission offices should have written procedures posted for exiting the building in the event of fire. All offices should be equipped with smoke detectors or automatic alarms and have fire extinguishers easily accessible. All offices should have at least two points of ingress/egress and all staff should know how to exit through these points.

4 – Hardware failure

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to hardware failure is low. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is low, and duration is likely to be low.

Failures of individual desktop computer systems and peripherals pose little risk of data loss to the agency and should result in little disruption in basic business operations.

Failures of network servers will result in some disruption of operations, but data backed up from the Ecology file server is recoverable.

Failure of Ecology network hardware may impact regular Commission business operations. Several agency laptop computers are equipped with cellular broadband cards, allowing some staff to conduct business over the internet in the event of an Ecology network failure.

Should the Commission web server fail, a spare server is available for immediate replacement. Total downtime is expected to be about one working day.

Hardware failures in field offices may result in disruption of operations until hardware can be repaired/replaced and reconfigured.

Failure of routers, modems and firewalls may cause a brief disruption or may take days to repair/replace.

Commission staff should backup their documents and data regularly.

Commission staff responsible for routers, firewalls, modems and similar computer equipment requiring specific configuration parameters should record these parameters and store this information offsite.

5 – Liquid leakage

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations by liquid leakage is low. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

Few liquids are stored in Commission offices, so there is little risk of damage to computing resources from liquid leakage. Plumbing leaks are the most likely hazard.

In the Lacey building, plumbing generally does not pass over work spaces containing computers. Commission staff should attempt to locate computers and important peripherals in sheltered locations to minimize damage from water leaks. Shutting off systems when unattended can reduce water-caused damage.

6 – Operator or user error

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations by operator or user error is low. Frequency of such events is medium, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

Operator or user error is a common occurrence in all business enterprises. The Commission is no exception.

From July 1999 through November 2003, Ecology staff recorded 296 service requests for the WSCC, or an average of seven requests a month. Of this total, only 17 calls were due to desktop hardware. Most service requests were for software problems. It is not known how many problems were due to configuration/installation errors and how many were caused by users. Resolution of these problems almost always occurred within a day, and often within an hour of the request.

Disruptions in service delivery due to errors in installing server software and maintaining such platforms are minimized by first performing such procedures on an identical spare machine.

For servers, backups of user data and configuration information should be done prior to implementing any significant upgrade or patch.

7 – Software error

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to software error is low. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

We house no critical systems, so software errors generally have little chance to significantly disrupt Commission operations. Software problems could disrupt our ability to provide certain services such as access to documents, forms and procedures via our web server.

8 – Telecommunications interruption

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to telecommunications interruption is low. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

Should the main telephone exchange or regional cellular systems become unavailable for an extended period, service delivery to conservation districts would be heavily impacted.

Most Commission staff has cellular phones. Should our primary telecommunications system become unavailable, staff can continue to provide service to our customers using agency and personal cell phones.

D – Intentional acts

1 – Alteration of data

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations from intentional alteration of data is low. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

Intentional alteration of significant data is possible by agency staff. Other agencies and our customers effectively provide verification of data processed by the Commission. Intentionally altered data may result in additional time to process and verify transactions and data tables, but would not substantially disrupt agency operations.

2 – Alteration of software

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations from altered software is low. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

In almost all cases, the Commission utilizes standard, off-the-shelf software. Should software become altered or damaged, reinstallation would correct the problem.

The Commission does not utilize applications hosted on our systems to manage business processes. Where applications are used, they are required by other agencies and integrity of those applications is the responsibility of the hosting agency.

For managing internal servers and our web server, proprietary management interfaces are utilized. Should the integrity of these operating systems and interfaces become damaged, reinstallation of software systems will correct the problem. Other security measures are in place to guard against root-level system changes.

3 – Computer virus

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to computer infection is medium. Frequency of opportunities to infect systems is high, potential severity is medium, and duration is low.

Intentional release of a computer virus, worm or Trojan on machines managed by the Commission is possible. However, each desktop and laptop computer is protected by modern antivirus systems. Those systems on the Ecology network are subject to traffic analysis and will be immediately disconnected from the network if found to be infected. With Commission computers residing on a large network, infections may propagate across the network very rapidly under favorable conditions.

Staffs in field offices use agency-provided VPN connections to protect data in transit. The agency deploys client-based system monitoring tools on all assigned desktop and laptop computers.

4 – Bomb threat

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations by bomb threat is low. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is low, and duration is low. Actual bombs – not just threats – are covered in the section on sabotage and terrorism.

The Commission headquarters office in Lacey follows Ecology procedures in the event of a bomb threat. Agency staff in field offices co-located with federal agencies and/or conservation districts are instructed to be familiar with, and follow, the procedures used by their office partners in the event of a bomb threat.

A bomb threat could be used as a ruse to remove personnel from spaces containing computing resources, potentially allowing unrestricted but brief access to systems and connections.

5 – Disclosure of confidential information

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to intentional disclosure of confidential information is medium. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is medium, and duration is low.

The risk of intentional disclosure of confidential information is low, primarily because the Commission handles almost no confidential information.

Intentional disclosure of attorney-client privileged information has relatively few impacts on our agency. The biggest impact is once disclosed, protection afforded by the attorney-client privilege evaporates.

Intentional disclosure of information pertaining to personnel or legal issues in conservation districts could increase the potential for an adverse judgment against the Commission. Agency staff works directly with our assigned Assistant Attorney General to reduce/prevent agency liability.

6 – Sabotage or terrorism

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations by sabotage or terrorism is medium. Frequency of such events is low, potential severity is high, and duration is medium.

The Commission's headquarters operation in Lacey was impacted by one incident of arson in May 1999. Fires were intentionally set in several places in the Ecology building, including in the space occupied by the US Environmental Protection Agency adjoining the Commission work space. These fires were not started by a Commission employee. Although the agency suffered inconvenience due to water damage, no computers were damaged and no information was lost.

The Commission headquarters is co-located with the Department of Ecology and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Historically, these regulatory agencies have been the focus of citizen unhappiness. Being co-located with them exposes our non-regulatory agency to somewhat higher risk of disruption due to sabotage or terrorism.

Agency field offices have been largely free of incidents, although the Colfax field office was broken into in 2001. Locks on that building were changed, and no additional incidents have occurred.

7 – Internet attacks

The risk of substantial disruption to Commission operations due to internet attacks is low. Frequency of such events is medium, potential severity is low, and duration is low.

Commission operations in Lacey reside behind a robust firewall system managed by Ecology. The largest risk involves outside attackers flooding the Ecology network connection to deny service to network computers. Ecology may utilize intelligent packet detection and filtering or operate honeypots to detect and automatically block such attempts, but these details are part of Ecology's confidential security program. The Commission does not know if Ecology monitors for intentional attacks initiated from inside the network.

Ecology also screens incoming e-mail for viruses and blocks some spam at the server. These network protection schemes reduce the risk to the Ecology network and Commission computers.

The Commission web server is connected to the internet through a high-speed line managed by the Department of Information Services. Access to our web server by the agency and citizens may be blocked if DIS-managed connections are flooded, damaged or otherwise become unavailable.

Should internet connections become unavailable for extended periods, telephone, fax and postal mail are viable alternative communication mechanisms until internet connectivity can be reestablished.

Section 4: Recovery Strategy

A – Priorities during recovery

Recovery operations following a disaster or substantial interruption in business operations of the Commission will be prioritized as follows, from highest priority to lowest:

- Protect the health, safety and welfare of people who may be impacted by site conditions or recovery operations.
- Protect state-owned assets, including computers.
- Protect network (state and local) resources.
- Restore basic business operations.
- Resume service to conservation districts, agencies and citizens of Washington State.
- Document recovery efforts to provide full accountability.

B – Recovery requirements for critical business operations

1 – Certify elections and appoint supervisors

Resources required for the Commission to certify conservation district elections and appoint conservation district board members include:

- A quorum of the Commission governing board.
- Election procedures available to conservation districts.
- Election assistance provided by the Commission to conservation districts.
- Election forms, uncertified results and other information provided to the Commission by conservation districts.

2 – Recommend funding and administer funds

Resources required for the Commission to develop budget proposals, recommend funding to meeting State and local needs, and administer funds provided to the Commission include:

- A quorum of the Commission governing board.
- Access to information and systems provided to small agencies by the Office of Financial Management.
- Commission staff with experience in crafting budgets and responding to requests for additional information.
- Well-trained, knowledgeable staff to write grant contracts, review and approve grant reimbursement requests, maintain appropriate records, and assist conservation districts.

3 – Review district operations and assist supervisors

Resources required for the Commission to review district operations and assist conservation district board members (district supervisors) include:

- Staff knowledgeable in conservation district operations to regularly evaluate local district operations and provide consistent, meaningful guidance to district governing boards.
- Staff trained to appropriately assist in resolving issues, effectively managing district personnel, seeking funding, and maintaining effective working relationships.

C – Provisions for offsite storage of critical data

1 – Provisions for headquarters operations

The Commission maintains little critical data. Contract face sheets, grant voucher requests and related information are provided by the Commission to the Office of Financial Management. Those records can be reconstructed in the event of a disaster. Signed grant contracts will be scanned and stored offsite.

Personal services contracts are filed with OFM and can be recovered.

Emergency contact information is maintained on paper forms in the Commission headquarters. In a disaster, these records may not be available.

Inventory records and vital receipts are important to maintain accountability and to protect state assets. We store electronic copies of inventory records on Ecology file servers which are backed up regularly, with back-ups stored offsite.

Monthly, information contained on key servers (internal and external) is copied to file servers for temporary storage. At least two generations of records are maintained.

Virtually all other records can be reconstructed from source documents held by conservation districts and by documents on file with OFM, the State Auditor's Office and the Attorney General's Office.

2 – Provisions for satellite operations

Commission operations in satellite locations will be provided equipment and procedures to perform weekly backups of working documents. Because these are one and two-person offices, these staff members will be allowed to provide offsite storage at their homes. The Commission will require notification if offsite storage will be provided in employee's homes, and will require a consent form to be signed by the employee and his/her spouse allowing Commission access to state-owned documents and devices.

D – Alternative processing strategies and facilities

1 – Command centers

No command center is formally established in this document.

Agency recovery coordinators

A primary and secondary recovery coordinator is established in this plan. The primary recovery coordinator will be the Executive Director of the WSCC. This position is currently held by Chris Pettit. If the primary coordinator cannot be contacted, the secondary recovery coordinator should be contacted. This position is currently held by Shana Joy, Regional Manager Coordinator. If neither of those individuals is available, any department head should be contacted.

Contact sequence	Name
First	Chris Pettit, Executive Director
Second	Shana Joy, Regional Manager Coordinator
Third	Ron Shultz, Director of Policy & Intergovernmental Relations Sarah Groth, Fiscal Manager Bill Eller, Voluntary Stewardship Program Coordinator, SAL

IT recovery coordinators

IT recovery will be managed by the Technical Services Manager. Currently, the Department of Ecology IT Manager fulfills that duty for the Commission (Teresa Roddy, Department of Ecology, IT Manager, 300 Desmond Drive SE, Lacey, WA 98503, 360-407-6475 (office), 360-407-6493 (fax). If the primary IT recovery coordinator cannot be contacted, the secondary IT recovery coordinator should be contacted. This position is currently held by Chris Pettit, Executive Director.

Agency Recovery and Resumption Team

The senior management team is designated by this plan as the Agency Recovery and Resumption Team (ARRT). The ARRT may include other staff as necessary to recovery from a disaster/problem and resume business operations. The senior management team consists of:

- Chris Pettit, Executive Director
- Sarah Groth, Fiscal Manager
- Shana Joy, Regional Manager Coordinator
- Ron Shultz, Director of Policy & Intergovernmental Relations
- Bill Eller, Voluntary Stewardship Program Coordinator, SAL

Recovery coordinators will coordinate information about working locations of staff and reestablish a working infrastructure to support continuation of agency services.

The primary recovery coordinators are located in or near the Olympia area. The secondary coordinator is located in eastern Washington. It is unlikely both sets of recovery coordinators would become incapacitated due to the same incident.

2 – Alternate business operations

In a disaster, employees are to work from home or from nearby conservation district offices whenever possible. Each agency staff member is provided with home phone numbers of all staff as well as a statewide directory of conservation district contact information.

In a disaster, employees are to attempt to contact the primary recovery coordinator (Chris Pettit) first. If contact cannot be established, staff should contact the secondary recovery coordinator (Shana Joy). If contact cannot be established, then attempts to notify any other senior staff members should be made.

If staff members are unable to contact others, they should protect themselves to the best of their ability until such time as contact can be reestablished.

3 – Alternate data processing

Offsite storage of inventory records and other difficult-to-replace documents will allow for rapid resumption of basic operations.

Access to secure systems provided as applications from the Office of Financial Management may take more time to restore. The Commission can go without processing grant vouchers and contract modifications for periods of up to four weeks without significantly impairing conservation district capabilities. Therefore, alternate data processing channels are not required.

4 – Alternate data communications

The Commission strategy of distributing portable computing resources to most agency staff provides a foundation to continue basic data communications in a disaster. Agency staff can utilize file stores and e-mail services on the Commission web server to interact in an emergency.

Section 5: Emergency Response and Problem Escalation

Disaster events are discrete, individual events or a series of events such as fires, floods, earthquakes and bombings. They are often unforeseen and cause substantial damage, lengthy disruption of business operations, or threaten to do so.

More subtle than disasters are problems. Disaster-level severity may evolve from problems that disrupt normal operations and then worsen or continue so long that the disruption becomes critical. Examples of problems that can evolve to become disasters include power brownouts, computer viruses, inclement weather, disease epidemics, sabotage, negligence, hardware failures, local telephone service failure, and software failure.

Emergency procedures or emergency response protocols direct the agency's response to disaster events.

Escalation procedures or problem escalation protocols direct the agency's response to problems.

Both protocols may result in the declaration of a disaster and subsequent activation of the recovery plan.

A – Emergency response protocol

1 – Disaster events

The primary and/or secondary recovery coordinator is authorized to declare an agency-wide disaster. Should those individuals be unavailable, any member of the Agency Recovery and Resumption Team (ARRT) may make such a declaration.

The primary and/or secondary recovery coordinator may declare a disaster.

In the event of a declared disaster, the Commission shall take specific actions to:

- Protect lives and safety of all personnel and gain immediate emergency help.
- Protect state-owned assets and reduce the duration and loss of information technology services and data.
- Inform the Agency Recovery/Resumption Team members a serious loss or interruption has occurred.
- Establish a focal point for coordinating the recovery program, communicating critical information, and assembling personnel.
- Establish contact with the Office of Emergency Management.

The following specific actions will be taken by the agency in this order:

- Individual staff will:
 - Immediately take whatever steps are necessary to protect themselves and contact emergency service providers.

- Immediately contact the primary recovery coordinator and inform that person of the nature and severity of the event. Should that individual not be available, the secondary recovery coordinator will be contacted. In the event the secondary recovery coordinator is also not available, staff is to attempt to contact departmental managers.
- Protect state assets as long as personal health and safety are not compromised.
- The agency recovery coordinator will:
 - Contact the Agency Recovery/Resumption Team (ARRT). If that is not possible, staff will be contacted. The ARRT will work directly with staff and members of the agency governing board to ensure emergency medical care and services are available to protect the health, safety and welfare of individuals.
 - Establish an ad hoc command center as necessary and inform all available governing board members and staff of the command center location and accessibility. Until a central point of operations can be established, staff is to work from their homes or local conservation district offices.
 - Contact the Office of Emergency Management if necessary.

2 – Problems

The primary and/or secondary recovery coordinator is authorized to declare an agency-wide problem. Should those individuals be unavailable, any member of the Agency Recovery/Resumption Team (ARRT) may make such a declaration.

The primary and/or secondary recovery coordinator may declare a problem.

In the event of a declared problem, the Commission shall take specific actions to:

- Protect lives and safety of all personnel and gain necessary assistance.
- Protect state-owned assets and reduce the duration and loss of information technology services and data.
- Prevent escalation of the problem to a disaster.

The following specific actions will be taken by the agency in this order:

- Individual staff will:
 - Immediately take whatever steps are necessary to protect them from harm.
 - Immediately inform the primary and/or secondary recovery coordinators. Should those individuals not be available, staff should contact any member of the ARRT. If ARRT members are not available, staff is to contact any staff members.
 - Protect state assets as long as personal safety is not compromised.
- The recovery coordinator will:
 - Contact the Agency Recovery/Resumption Team. If that is not possible, staff will be contacted.

- Establish a temporary command center if necessary. If normal office locations are unsafe to occupy or are inaccessible, staff are to work from their homes or local conservation district offices.
- Contact Commission governing board members and establish regular communications with them.

B – Problem escalation protocol

The senior management team, functioning as the Agency Recovery and Resumption Team (ARRT), will communicate daily until the recovery coordinator cancels the problem declaration. Contact information is contained in the attached appendices.

The ARRT will collaborate on the need to widen the information circle and assign tasks.

Section 6: Plan Activation

A – First alert procedures

Governing board members or staff suspecting that a problem or disaster may occur or has occurred will first attempt to contact the primary and/or secondary recovery coordinators. Should those individuals be unavailable, any member of the Agency Recovery and Resumption Team (ARRT) may be contacted.

The recovery coordinator (or if unavailable, any member of the Agency Recovery and Resumption Team) may confirm a problem or disaster as outlined in Section 5.

Once a problem or disaster is confirmed, it may be declared by any recovery coordinator or ARRT member following the steps outlined in Section 5.

B – Problem and disaster confirmation procedures

Confirming a problem or disaster exists requires evaluating the current situation on two parallel tracks:

1. Determining what is actually happening now, or about to happen; and
2. Evaluating the risk level of future business impairment from the current situation.

The recovery coordinator(s) will evaluate possible and actual situations to confirm that a problem or disaster exists. The ARRT will perform this evaluation should the recovery coordinator(s) be unavailable.

1 – Human assets

Loss of a key individual in the agency structure may disrupt some business operations for a brief period. This is an example of a problem.

Loss of multiple key individuals may disrupt business operations for weeks or months, and could be considered a problem or a disaster.

Loss of a quorum of the governing board or most operating staff would severely impair business operations and would be considered a disaster.

2 – Infrastructure

Infrastructure is loosely defined as structures, systems and devices required to perform critical business operations.

Loss of the headquarters office would be a disaster, but without loss of staff, this situation recoverable in a matter of weeks or months. Conversely, loss of a satellite office may create a problem for the agency, but would not substantially disrupt day-to-day business operations of the entire agency.

Systems are generally considered to be combinations of hardware and software, connectivity systems and telecommunications networks. Loss of a server is recoverable. Short-term disruption of internet connectivity may be a problem; long-term disruption of internet service would be a greater problem but is unlikely to be considered a disaster.

Devices are limited to individual, specific devices. Loss of a data backup device would create a potential problem. Loss of an individual computer would not be a significant problem unless data on that computer was not backed up and recoverable. Loss of a vehicle would create a potential problem.

3 – Reporting problems or disasters to management

Staff will remain attentive to possible problems and disasters that could:

- Compromise the health, safety and welfare of agency board members, staff or the public;
- Compromise network and data security; or
- Disrupt business operations of the agency.

Such situations or conditions will be immediately reported verbally to a member of the senior management team. Following a verbal report, staff is expected to document their verbal report by memo or e-mail to a senior management team member.

4 – Emergency contacts

Procedures for agency staff to make emergency contacts are described in Section 5 and contact information is contained in the appendices.

5 – Command center activation

Procedures for command center activation are described in Section 4.

6 – Recovery team notification

Procedures for recovery team notification are contained in Section 5.

7 – Disaster declaration

Once a problem or disaster has been confirmed as described in Section 5, the recovery coordinator(s) (or if unavailable, any member of the Agency Recovery and Resumption Team) is authorized to declare a problem or disaster per Section 5.

8 – Informing others

Section 5 includes procedures to inform agency staff and governing board members of a problem or disaster.

Customers will be notified of disasters by e-mail if that service is available. Follow-up phone calls will be made to each conservation district office when possible. Ultimately, written notification of the event and how the agency responded will be provided to customers.

The public will be informed via postings and updates on the agency website. The Commission expects that the Washington State web portal, *Access Washington*, will also be available to provide meaningful information to citizens.

Section 7: Recovery Operations

A – Recovery Flow

1. Individual staff will protect self and others.
2. Individual staff will notify recovery coordinators or senior management team members of known or suspected problems or disasters.
3. Individual staff will protect state-owned assets, including computers, networks and data, unless such actions compromise personal health or safety.
4. Recovery coordinators (or the Senior Management Agency Recovery and Resumption Team) will proceed as described in Section 5.
5. IT recovery coordinators will follow the procedures described in Section 5.

B – Recovery team organization

It is the responsibility of the Commission Executive Director to implement an agency-wide recovery plan. The alternate for this person is the Commission Regional Manager Coordinator.

It is the responsibility of the Commission Technical Services Manager to implement a recovery plan for information technology resources. The alternate for this person is the Commission Executive Director.

1 – IT expertise

The Technical Services Manager within the Department of Ecology has technical expertise in computer and network systems. The agency has an interagency agreement through South Puget Sound Community College and the Department of Enterprise Services for emergency technical support.

2 – Programmatic expertise

The following employees have expertise in programmatic issues:

- Chris Pettit, Executive Director
- Sarah Groth, Fiscal Manager
- Shana Joy, Regional Manager Coordinator
- Ron Shultz, Director of Policy & Intergovernmental Relations
- Jon Culp, Manager, Water Resources
- Bill Eller, Elections and Appointments

3 – Business services/support

The following employees have expertise in supporting business services:

- Sarah Groth, Fiscal Manager

- Lori Gonzalez, Executive Assistant

An Outreach and Education Coordinator may be called upon to assist in providing agency communications and public updates if needed.

C – Recovery team plans

Recovery of data and information systems is documented in the agency IT Security Policy.

As a very small agency, recovery teams will be most effective when formed as needed at the direction of the recovery coordinator. Establishing a formal recovery team prior to a disaster makes little sense for an agency of our size since most of such a team may be injured or become otherwise unavailable in the event of a disaster.

D – Primary site restoration or relocation

As a small agency, the Commission requires relatively little space to resume business operations. Critical business data is largely recoverable from backups and from other entities (primarily conservation districts and the Office of Financial Management). The Commission is banking on a distributing computing strategy in which most users are assigned laptop computers as desktop replacements, and at any given time all laptop computers are not located in a single facility.

The small size of the Commission provides much greater flexibility in a business relocation/resumption scenario than will be experienced by larger state agencies.

Section 8: Plan Validation/Testing

The validity of this plan will be tested through unannounced drills as determined by the Executive Director. Such testing is necessary to confirm the agency can implement a smooth recovery from a major problem or disaster and expeditiously resume business operations.

Test	Responsible person
Notification of recovery coordinators of a problem or disaster.	Executive Director
Notification of a member of the Agency Recovery and Resumption Team (ARRT).	Executive Director
Notification of governing board members.	Executive Director
Access to critical business records.	Fiscal Manager
Reconstruction of operating files.	Fiscal Manager
Accessing and verifying server backups.	Manager, Technical Services

Section 9: Training

The purpose of training is to maintain and improve knowledge, skills and abilities that benefit the agency. A comprehensive training policy is currently in development. Key points in the draft policy include the following points:

- Agency staff with emergency response responsibilities (State Agency Liaison) must be compliant with NIMS training. Other managers and staff are encouraged to become NIMS compliant.
- All agency staff must have basic skills in Microsoft Office products. Where skills do not already exist, training will be provided.
- All agency staff authorized to drive state vehicles must complete a defensive driving course.
- All agency staff whose primary job functions include directly assisting conservation districts with personnel issues must complete HELP Academy training.
- Staff processing financial documents must attend mandatory training provided by the Office of Financial Management.

Section 10: Plan Maintenance

Primary responsibility for maintaining this plan rests with the Commission Executive Director. This plan will be reviewed and evaluated annually, and will be amended when required. The Commission intends this plan to remain a living, working document, so as conditions changes with people and infrastructure, plan amendments will become necessary.

Section 11: Supporting Documentation

This plan complements and does not replace other plans of the Commission, specifically the *Washington State Conservation Commission Information Technology Security Plan* (modified August 2008), the *Washington State Conservation Commission Disaster Recovery and Business Resumption Plan* dated July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009, and the *Conservation Commission Emergency Policy Position and Action Plan* dated July 7, 1981, and any subsequent amendments to those plans.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: Revisions to Commission Meetings Policy 21-06

Action Item

X

Informational Item

Summary:

In the 2022 legislative session, changes were made to the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). The WSCC is subject to the OPMA and minor edits were necessary to our Commission Meetings Policy 21-06 to align with the new language in the OPMA. Additionally, new language was added pertaining to determination of a quorum and voting to address common questions that have come up over time around these two things. Staff recommend that the Commissioners take action to review and adopt the revised Commission Meetings Policy as presented.

Staff Contact:

Shana Joy, sjoy@scc.wa.gov, 360.480.2078

Background and Discussion:

In 2021, the Governance Sub-committee was formed to construct recommended governance policies for the Commission and undertook related policies pertaining to Commission meetings and Commissioner compensation. The Committee presented a final draft of the Commission Meetings Policy that was adopted at the December 2021 Commission meeting. A revised version of the policy, to correct an error that was caught, was presented and adopted at the January 2022 Commission meeting. In follow up to the presentation by the Attorney General's office at the May 19th Commission meeting, staff undertook an additional review of this policy to ensure the language aligned with the new changes to the OPMA. That internal review also turned up a need for the additional language that was inserted pertaining to determination of quorum and voting. The resulting revised version of the policy is now coming forward for review and potential action by Commissioners.

Recommended Action and Options:

Option 1: Take action to adopt the revised Commission Meetings policy as presented.

Option 2: Commissioners take additional time to review the revised policy and include a potential action item at the next regular Commission meeting in September.



Washington State Conservation Commission

Policy #	21-06 Board of Commissioners Meetings
Applies to:	WSCC Commissioners and Staff
Effective Date:	Board approved on December 2, 2021

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidance for the structure and conduct of meetings of the Board of Commissioners.

BACKGROUND

The WSCC is established and authorized under RCW 89.08. Specifically, RCW 89.08.040 states the Commission may adopt such rules as may be necessary for the execution of its functions. RCW 42.30.070 also authorizes the governing body of a public agency to adopt such rules or policies as required regarding the conduct of business by that body. Other, specific portions of the RCW and Washington Administrative Code provide guidance for this policy.

POLICY

Regular Meetings

The WSCC Board shall meet a minimum of six times per year on the third Thursday of every other month beginning in January each year. Regular meetings may be conducted over one or more concurrent days. A schedule of the regular meetings of the WSCC Board shall be filed with the State Code Reviser on or before January of each year for publication in the Washington state register. RCW 42.30.070

Special Meetings

The WSCC Board may schedule and conduct special meetings as deemed necessary at any time. The WSCC commits to following all requirements for public noticing of special meetings under the Open Public Meetings Act, RCW 42.30.080.

Emergency Meetings

Emergency meetings of the Board may be called by the Executive Director and Executive Committee, if there is a need for expedited action by the Board to meet the emergency. Consistent with the provisions of RCW 42.30.070, the Chairperson of the Board may provide for a meeting time and location other than the regular meeting location and time. Notice requirements do not apply to emergency meetings called for emergency matters as permitted by RCW 42.30.070, 42.30.080, and 42.14.075.

Executive Sessions

Executive sessions may be conducted from time to time only under the specific circumstances for which executive sessions are authorized pursuant to RCW 42.30.110. All executive sessions will be properly stated on the meeting agenda with the specific reason authorizing the executive session.

Format and Location of Meetings

(Meetings of the Board could be conducted in person or remotely. In person meetings will have a remote participation option.) All meetings of the Board will have a physical location for attendance by the public. Remote options will be available for board members who have extenuating circumstances that prevent them from attending in person. Every effort will be made to provide a means for remote meeting participation for the public for all regular and special business meetings of the Commission.

In the case of a formally declared emergency, concerns for the safety of Commissioners, staff or the public, or in times of constraints to the agency's operating budget, regular and special meetings of the Commission may be conducted only through the use of a remote meeting platform.

Opportunity for public participation will be provided through the appropriate use of technology to ensure that members of the public can see and hear the proceedings. An appropriate method of soliciting and considering public comment prior to any action items will be utilized.

All information pertaining to access and participation in a regular or special business meeting of the WSCC shall be made available on the WSCC website at www.scc.wa.gov at least 7 business days prior to any meeting.

The *(format of and/or)* physical locations for a calendar year of regular meetings will be reviewed and approved at the September meeting of the full Board in the prior year. Locations and corresponding meeting dates, once approved, will be made available on the WSCC website at www.scc.wa.gov.

Quorum and Voting

Per RCW 89.08.050 "a majority of the commission shall constitute a quorum and all actions of the commission shall be by a majority vote of the members present and voting at a meeting at which a quorum is present." For further clarity, a quorum or a majority of Commission members is considered to be at least six Commissioners present. Ex-officio Commission members present

are included to determine quorum and may vote on business matters. Commissioners participating in person at the physical meeting location or via remote means will be considered to be present for the purposes of determining quorum. Commission staff will conduct a roll call of Commissioners present at the beginning of each meeting and the determination of quorum will be entered into the meeting minutes. Commissioners participating remotely may vote on business matters just as those Commissioners present at the physical meeting location may vote.

Parliamentary Procedure

The Board of Commissioners shall follow Roberts Rules of Order in the conduct of all regular and special meetings. The Chairperson shall serve as the parliamentarian for all meetings. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson shall serve as the parliamentarian.

Meeting Accommodations

Persons needing an accommodation to participate in WSCC public meetings should call WSCC staff at 360-407-6211, or call 711 relay service. All accommodation requests should be received no later than 7 business days prior to a scheduled meeting, to ensure preparations are appropriately made.

Meeting Agendas (replaces prior policy no. 05-04)

Meeting agendas will be set through coordination and communication between the Executive Director and Executive Committee. An agenda item may be requested by communicating in writing with the Executive Director, or designated WSCC staff, at least 30 days prior to a scheduled regular meeting. A form may be established and provided for this purpose. Making a request for an agenda item is not a guarantee that the item will be included on an agenda. The Executive Committee and Executive Director shall make all decisions pertaining to requests from individual Commissioners, partners, or the public as meeting agendas are set. Requests from WSCC staff for agenda items shall be within the authority of the Executive Director to manage.

Consent Agenda

The Board may use a consent agenda as a means to expedite the disposition of routine matters and to dispose of other items of business it chooses not to discuss. All administrative matters delegated to the Executive Director that are required to be approved by the Board will be acted upon by the Board via the consent agenda. An item may be removed from the consent agenda upon approval of a majority of the Board members present at the meeting.

Meeting Packets and Information

Packets of written materials or information will be compiled and made available to Commissioners, WSCC staff, and the public at least 10 business days prior to a regular meeting and at least 48 hours in advance of a special meeting. Packets may be directly mailed or emailed to Commissioners and will be made available to the public through the WSCC website at www.scc.wa.gov. Alternative formats of written materials or information may be accessed by

contacting WSCC staff at 360-407-6200 at least 7 business days in advance of the meeting.

Public Comment

Public comment will be solicited prior to all action items that appear on the meeting agenda. Public comment should be focused on the agenda item under consideration at the time. An opportunity for public comment will be afforded to each person that signs-in requesting to provide comment (for in-person meetings) or indicates a desire to provide comment by raising their hand or utilizing chat/question features on a remote meeting platform. The Chair person may limit the time allotted to each person.

Staff Participation

WSCC staff may provide additional or late-breaking information on any agenda item upon being recognized by the Chairperson. Information offered should be focused upon the agenda item under consideration at the time and factual in nature. WSCC staff may also respond to questions posed to them directly by Commissioners during a meeting.

Minutes and Recording of Meetings

WSCC staff will create action-oriented written minutes of each regular and special meeting of the full Board. Commission staff will conduct a roll call of Commissioners present at the beginning of each meeting and the determination of quorum will be entered into the meeting minutes. Draft minutes will be reviewed and approved at the subsequent meeting of the full Board. Approved minutes will be made available to the public on the WSCC website at www.scc.wa.gov within 30 days of approval by the Board.

Electronic recordings may be made of either in-person or remotely conducted meetings for the sole purpose of facilitating accurate and timely creation of written meeting minutes. Any recordings created will be managed according to the appropriate records retention schedule published by the Washington State Archives.

Disruptive Behavior

To ensure that the Board's meetings are conducted with maximum effectiveness and efficiency, Commissioners will:

- Communicate openly and respectfully with each other and with staff, and
- Support the Chair's efforts to facilitate an orderly meeting.

It is inappropriate and will not be tolerated for any person in attendance at a business meeting of the full Board to do any of the following: engage in disorderly, disruptive, disturbing, delaying or boisterous conduct, such as, but not limited to, handclapping, stomping of feet, whistling, making noise, use of profane language or obscene gestures, yelling or similar demonstrations, which conduct substantially interrupts, delays, or disturbs the peace and good order of the proceedings of the Board.

Any person attending a business meeting of the Board who is deemed by the Chairperson to be unreasonably disturbing the business of the Board shall be asked to cease such disruption by the Chairperson. The Chairperson shall determine if the conduct is actually disruptive and whether the conduct has impaired the ability of the Board to attend to the business of the agency. If so, the Chairperson may, on their own authority or with consent of the Board, remove the person from the meeting and enter into the record the basis for removing the person. Such removal may include, in the case of remote participation, the termination of the individual's remote access to the meeting. Continued disruptions may result in a recess or adjournment of the meeting consistent with RCW 42.30.050:

In the event that any meeting is interrupted by a group or groups of persons so as to render the orderly conduct of such meeting unfeasible and order cannot be restored by the removal

of individuals who are interrupting the meeting, the members of the governing body conducting the meeting may order the meeting room cleared and continue in session or may

adjourn the meeting and reconvene at another location selected by majority vote of the members. In such a session, final disposition may be taken only on matters appearing on the agenda. Representatives of the press or other news media, except those participating in the disturbance, shall be allowed to attend any session held pursuant to this section. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the governing body from establishing a procedure for readmitting an individual or individuals not responsible for disturbing the orderly conduct of the meeting.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
FROM: Christopher Pettit, Executive Director
SUBJECT: September Commission Meeting Date Change Request

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

The host district has indicated that they and the host venue have encountered a conflict with the currently scheduled date for the September Commission meeting.

To better plan for the tour and meeting, and to accommodate the Commission at the desired venue, the host district has requested the date be changed to the following week.

Conservation Commission meetings are established in agency rule as the third Thursday of every other month. WAC 135-04-020.

State agencies may change the meeting date published in agency rules by passing a motion setting the date and publishing the motion in the State Register 20 days prior. RCW 42.30.075.

Requested Action:

To accept the request of the September host district to change the September Commission meeting date from Thursday, September 15 to Thursday, September 21, 2022.

Staff Contact:

Christopher Pettit: cpettit@scc.wa.gov / 360-789-6348

Lori Gonzalez: lgonzalez@scc.wa.gov / 360-791-0226

Recommended Action and Options:

Requesting passage of motion to set a new September meeting date.



904 W Robert Bush Dr.
South Bend, WA 98586
(360) 875-6735

July 11, 2022

To:
WSCC Executive Director Chris Pettit
WSCC Chair Daryl Williams

Hello,

The Pacific Conservation District (PCD) has been invited to host the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) regular meeting in September. PCD would love to host this event, however the meeting date that are scheduled are problematic for the CD, and the hosting event location for the meeting, the Shoalwater Bay Tribe. PCD is officially requesting a change of date for the venue from September 15th & 16th to **September 21 and 22**.

PCD would like to present to the Commission the great work that PCD has completed, work that is planned, and to introduce the many partners we are working with to accomplish these projects. The date change of venue would work better for all those involved. We hope the Commission members understand the need for the request. Please feel free to contact Mike Nordin, CD manager if there are any questions, (360) 208-4451.

Thank You for your consideration,
Mike Nordin



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting & Budget

SUBJECT: 2023-2025 Biennial Budget Requests

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

Summary:

Staff are requesting approval and prioritization for the seventeen 2023-2025 biennial budget packages listed below for further development and submittal. Staff are prioritizing the packages based on several factors, including 23-25 budget survey results from districts, new items that were added to our statute in the 2022 supplemental budget, and how the packet items tie to the State Conservation Commission's (SCC) [2022-2027 5-year Strategic Plan](#).

Requested Action:

Approve and prioritize the seventeen budget packages and not to exceed amounts for the budget packages for continued development and submittal to Office of Financial Management by the deadline of September 20, 2022.

Staff Contact:

Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting and Budget, sgroth@scc.wa.gov / 360-790-3501

Background and Discussion:

SCC is requesting approval for continue to develop the seventeen decision packages listed below, in staff recommended priority order.

Operating:

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) - not to exceed \$10,000,000

To achieve sustainable natural resources and farmland, Washington must engage more residents and landowners in conservation efforts. The total estimated biennial need for this important work is over \$24M, we are requesting \$10M. These services require staff time and funding, and current

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) funding only allows a small percentage of landowners to receive the assistance they need to achieve resource stewardship goals. This proposed increase will enable conservation districts to reach a broader cross section of their communities and build voluntary partnerships with far more residents than is possible now. As community engagement grows districts will be better able to provide the expertise needed to design more farm-friendly and other projects that protect and enhance healthy water, air, and land for all. Conservation districts are trusted, non-regulatory, community-based entities, making them uniquely positioned to develop relationships and provide appropriate site-specific expertise. This could include conservation and farm planning, nutrient management, habitat restoration, urban agriculture and conservation, soil health, local food systems resiliency, range management, or other types of specialized expertise.

Riparian Restoration Projects - not to exceed \$3,000,000

In the 2022 supplemental operating budget the Legislature provided \$10,000,000 in operating funds to the Commission “to provide grants for riparian restoration projects with landowners.” The funding was provided from the Salmon Recovery Account established by the Legislature in the supplemental budget. Since the funding is in the operating budget, funds not spent by June 30, 2023 will revert to the Salmon Recovery Account. If the Commission has unfunded needs or projects needing additional funding, the Commission will need to request these funds in the 2023-25 biennial budget. The Commission is currently making funding available to conservation districts for salmon riparian projects from the amounts appropriated. However, it’s not known how much of the appropriation will be spent in the current fiscal year. Although the funding is for riparian projects, it’s difficult to complete projects with operating funds since funds not spent by the end of the fiscal year (or biennium) are lost. Capital funding is more suited to projects since funding may be reappropriated if more time is needed to complete projects.

This proposal is split between operating and capital budgets. Operating funds would be used to fund activities such as landowner technical assistance and district outreach for landowner engagement and project recruitment. The capital funding would be used specifically for project design, implementation, and maintenance.

Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency - not to exceed \$5,000,000

Conservation districts are essential local partners in delivering forest health and community wildfire resiliency services to private landowners and this work contributes directly to shared goals and objectives within DNR’s 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan, Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan, and State Forest Action Plan in addition to local priorities established in the majority of conservation district long range plans. Services include but are not limited to: forest stewardship plans, individual home or community scale ignition zone risk assessments, vegetation chipping programs, home hardening projects, assisting communities with accessing the Firewise™ USA Sites program and community fire adaptation, and homeowner/resident education and workshops to connect locals with available programs and financial assistance resources.

Ag Science Program - not to exceed \$2,000,000 (\$1,000,000 per fiscal year)

The proposed SCC Agricultural Science program would bring together scientists and on-the-ground practitioners from different backgrounds, organizations (e.g., conservation districts, tribes, federal, state, and local agencies, universities, NGOs, etc.), and disciplines (e.g. economists, hydrologists, sociologists, and ecologist). Participants in the Agricultural Science program will work together to facilitate advancements in applied science around issues pertaining to ecosystem functions and values, climate adaptation, agricultural viability, and ecosystem resilience within agricultural landscapes in Washington state. Examples include: science-based prioritization of riparian conservation/restoration activities, achieving water quality and quantity goals through incentive-based approaches, improved monitoring of the effects of BMP implementation on natural resources, and other themes related to the SCC's strategic goals.

SCC FTE Needs - not to exceed \$0

The proposed SCC package would be for up to three additional SCC FTE's. With Supplemental funding for FY23 SCC's operating budget grew by over 70% and the capital budget grew by almost 15%. With this also brought significant increases to existing programs along with new programs, SCC staff have been working hard to implement the new programs and funding. We have identified the need for up to 3 new FTE's, we will be able to fund these positions from existing resources including utilizing our 3% administrative rate on capital programs.

Disaster Assistance Program (DAP) - not to exceed \$1,950,000

The DAP was first funded at \$600,000 in the FY 2022-2023 supplemental budget. The legislature directed the Commission to focus the DAP first on addressing the flooding disaster that occurred in Whatcom County in Nov-Dec 2021, and then to make the program available state-wide for any disaster. All available funding has been exhausted, and there are no more available funds. This proposed funding level would support Commission administration of the program and grants to farmers and ranchers affected by disaster state-wide.

Voluntary Stewardship Program - not to exceed \$1,500,000

The VSP is currently funded at \$8,425,000 with operating funds. That baseline funding supports Commission administration of the program, state agency participation in the Technical Panel as required by statute, the operation of the Statewide Advisory Committee, and allocations to each county for VSP implementation. Additional funding is requested to support county monitoring requirements and Commission reporting requirements.

Capital:

Natural Resource Investments (NRI) - not to exceed \$9,800,000

Enables conservation districts to help local landowners pay for and construct conservation projects that address the most pressing state and local priorities, such as managing forests for wildfire resiliency, upgrading irrigation systems for water conservation, building manure storage facilities, and installing livestock fencing for pasture management. At this time, 291 landowners are ready to

invest in 536 practices on their properties to improve natural resources, and we expect that number to grow.

Riparian Restoration Projects - not to exceed \$10,000,000

In the 2022 supplemental operating budget the Legislature provided \$10,000,000 in operating funds to the Commission “to provide grants for riparian restoration projects with landowners.” The funding was provided from the Salmon Recovery Account established by the Legislature in the supplemental budget. Since the funding is in the operating budget, funds not spent by June 30, 2023 will revert to the Salmon Recovery Account. If the Commission has unfunded needs or projects needing additional funding, the Commission will need to request these funds in the 2023-25 biennial budget. The Commission is currently making funding available to conservation districts for salmon riparian projects from the amounts appropriated. However, it’s not known how much of the appropriation will be spent in the current fiscal year. Although the funding is for riparian projects, it’s difficult to complete projects with operating funds since funds not spent by the end of the fiscal year (or biennium) are lost. Capital funding is more suited to projects since funding may be reappropriated if more time is needed to complete projects.

This proposal is split between operating and capital budgets. Operating funds would be used to fund activities such as landowner technical assistance and district outreach for landowner engagement and project recruitment. The capital funding would be used specifically for project design, implementation, and maintenance.

Farmland Preservation and Land Access - not to exceed \$4,000,000

The SCC was allocated \$2 million of one-time funding in the last Capital budget to create the Farmland Protection and Land Access program (FPLA). This critical and necessary program supports Washington farmers and keeps land in production. The program also facilitates land access to underserved producers including young and beginning farmers, people of color, and veterans. The SCC is seeking Commission authorization to request up to \$4 million for FPLA in the '23-25 budget to create a sustainable program. The SCC will request this additional funding be made ongoing.

Irrigation Efficiencies - not to exceed \$6,000,000

The Water Irrigation Efficiencies Program (IEP) is a statewide effort to improve how water is delivered and applied on agricultural lands. Projects funded through this program provide improved on-farm water application and delivery so water use is more efficient, while still allowing the producer to grow crops.

Shellfish - not to exceed \$4,000,000

The SCC Shellfish Program helps fund voluntary, watershed-based efforts that are proven effective at protecting shellfish growing areas by providing cost-share for the implementation of BMPs that support manure management, livestock exclusion, stream restoration, and other projects that

improve water quality. The program also supports Governor Inslee's Shellfish Initiative and the Puget Sound Action Agenda strategic initiative to recover shellfish beds.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) - not to exceed \$3,000,000

Covers state match needed to bring millions of Farm Bill dollars to Washington for RCPP projects that unite multiple partners in solving natural resource issues. The SCC has been designated to pass-through required state capital match for five RCPP projects. RCPP projects create jobs and make measurable progress on urgent issues, including water quality, fish and wildlife habitat restoration, drinking and irrigation water supply, forest health and wildfire resiliency, and farmland preservation.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP Cost Share & TA) - not to exceed \$7,725,000

This request is to provide matching state funds for program management and project implementation to continue the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) with private landowners. CREP is a federal program administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), who pays 80% of the costs of this program in Washington State. State money funds the remaining 20%. This voluntary program addresses degraded habitat for ESA-listed salmon, and in turn, helps orca. Conservation districts develop partnerships with willing farmers and plant native trees and shrubs while removing livestock and agricultural activities from the riparian area of streams on privately owned agricultural land. In the past two decades, CREP has become the largest riparian restoration program in the state.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP PIP Loan Program) - not to exceed \$100,000

This request is to provide agency spending authority for funds currently in a revolving account for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to loan private landowners funds that bridge a payment gap in the program. CREP is a federal program administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), who pays half of the funds to participants upon installation, while state money funds 10% of the installation cost. Upon completion of all aspects of the project, FSA pays a Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) of 40% of the installation cost. The delay, sometimes for up to three years, in repayment has been a barrier to participation by some landowners, so the PIP loan program was developed to encourage greater participation. The participants assign their FSA PIP to SCC to secure the loan and SCC then is able to offer repaid funds to new participants. This request is not new funding; the PIP loan program is a revolving fund and is being requested for authority to spend repaid funds. CREP addresses degraded habitat for ESA-listed salmon, and in turn, helps orca. In the past two decades, CREP has become the largest riparian restoration program in the state.

Voluntary Stewardship Program Project Funding (VSP) - not to exceed \$3,000,000

Requested funding continues the VSP cost-share program with private landowners first funded in the FY 2022-23 supplemental budget.

Washington Shrubstepp Restoration Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI) - not to exceed \$1,500,000

Requested capital funding would continue wildlife friendly fencing projects that are currently being completed with pass through funding from WDFW. The projects would still be guided, evaluated and selected through the WSRRI process but would move a portion of the grant program implementation directly to SCC.

Recommended Action and Options:

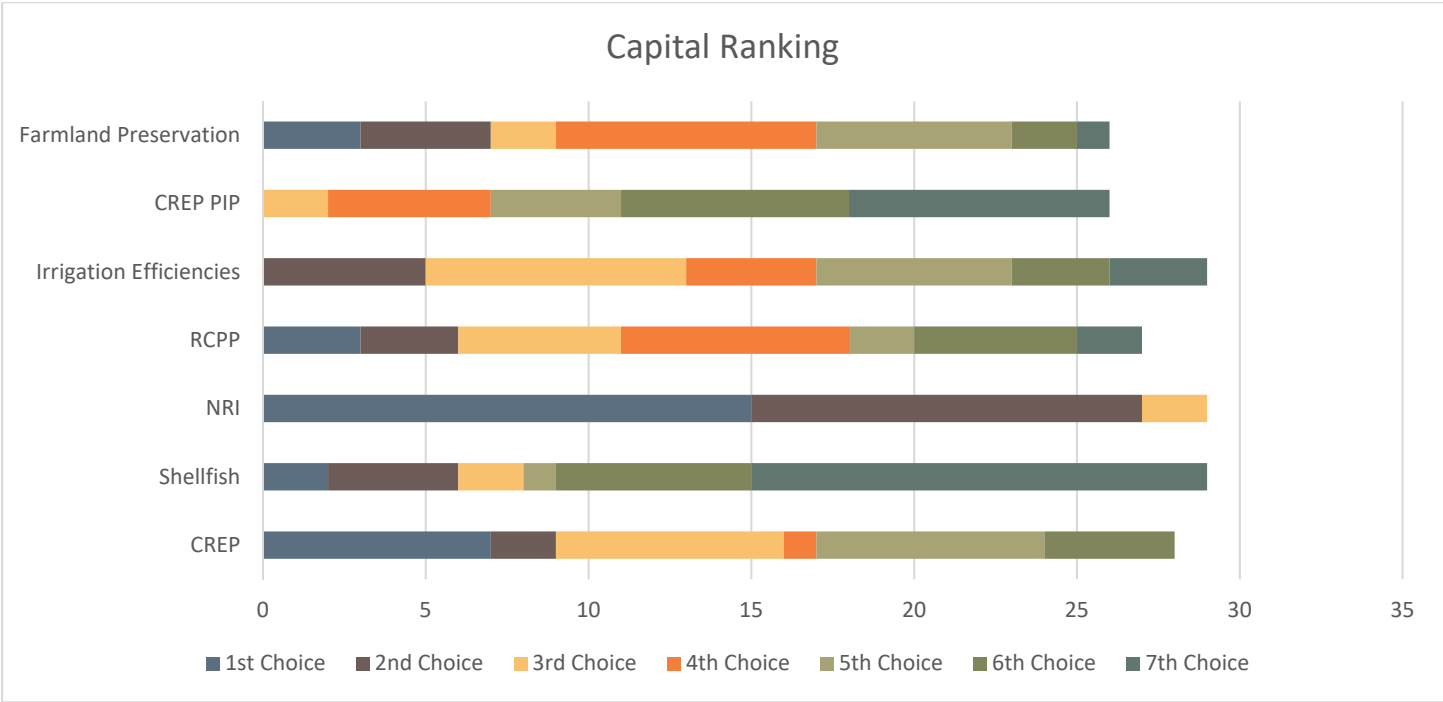
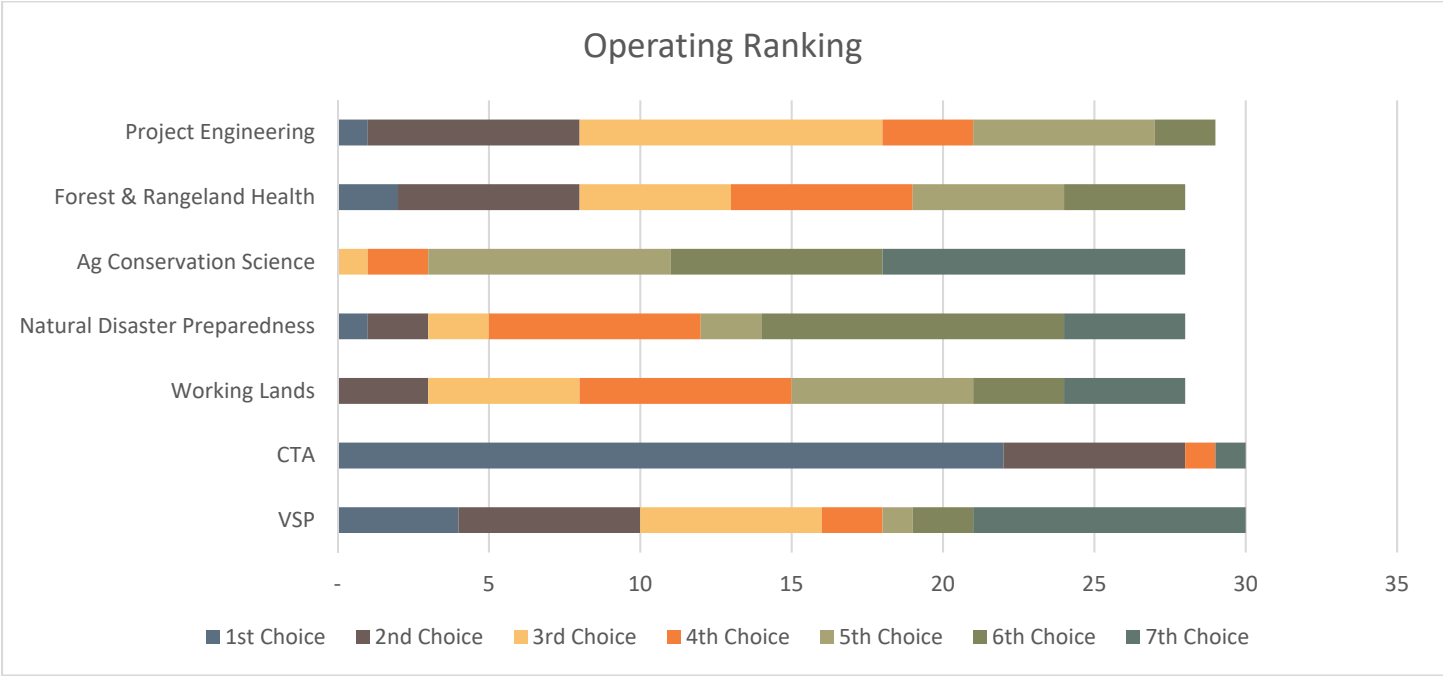
Approve and prioritize the seventeen budget packages for further development and submittal to Office of Financial Management by the deadline of September 20, 2022 as listed below, along with not to exceed amounts for the requests:

Operating:

- Conservation Technical Assistance - not to exceed \$10,000,000
- Riparian Restoration Projects - \$3,000,000
- Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency - not to exceed \$5,000,000
- Ag Science Program - not to exceed \$2,000,000
- SCC FTE needs – no funding requested can do within existing resources
- Disaster Agriculture Program (DAP) - not to exceed \$1,950,000
- Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) not to exceed \$1,500,000

Capital:

- Natural Resource Investments (NRI) - not to exceed \$9,800,000
- Riparian Restoration Projects - \$10,000,000
- Farmland Preservation and Land Access (FPLA) - not to exceed \$4,000,000
- Irrigation Efficiencies - not to exceed \$6,000,000
- Shellfish - not to exceed \$4,000,000
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) - not to exceed \$3,000,000
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) - not to exceed \$7,725,000
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) PIP - not to exceed \$1,000
- Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) - not to exceed \$3,000,000
- Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI) - not to exceed \$1,500,000





Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Kate Delavan, Farmland Preservation Coordinator

SUBJECT: Farmland Protection and Land Access (FPLA) Program Guidelines

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

Commissioners authorized staff to seek stakeholder feedback on the Draft FPLA Program Guidelines at the May 2022 Commission Meeting. The comment period was open for 30 days and closed on July 7, 2022. Staff reviewed comments, noted responses, and adjusted the guidelines in response to the feedback received.

Requested Action:

Staff propose the Commission adopt the revised FPLA Program Guidelines.

Staff Contact:

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

Background and Discussion:

The Farmland Protection and Land Access (FPLA) program was awarded \$2 million via proviso in the 2022 Supplemental Capital Budget (SSB 5651), Section 3050. FPLA is the result of several years of stakeholder conversations and is broadly supported by the land trust and farmland protection community. Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP) staff developed the concept for FPLA with input from stakeholders to complement the Buy-Protect-Sell category of [FarmPAI](#), a program of the Washington State Housing Finance Commission. FPLA serves the dual purpose of permanently protecting high-quality farmland and facilitating access to land for next generation farmers and ranchers.

FarmPAI provides conservation entities with low-interest loans for the fee-simple acquisition of at-risk farmland. FPLA grants fund the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement. The agricultural conservation easement ensures the land stays open and available for farming in

perpetuity. By restricting or removing certain development rights that are incompatible with agriculture, the FPLA agricultural conservation easement makes the farm more affordable for the future farm owner. Used in conjunction with FarmPAI, FPLA will result in the permanent protection of high-quality farmland at imminent risk of development and facilitate transfer to the next generation farmer.

The budget proviso states FPLA funds need to “support opportunities for all producers but shall prioritize: (a) conservation of high priority agricultural land at imminent risk of development; and (b) grants for the purchase of agricultural easements to historically underserved producers, as defined in 7 24 C.F.R. Sec. 1470.3 (2022), including young and beginning farmers, people of color, and veterans.”

Connection to the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan

FPLA aligns most closely with the Agricultural and Working Lands Viability and Food Systems Support priority area of the Strategic Plan. Specific draft objectives, goals, and tactics supported by or related to FPLA include:

- Objective: SCC assists in the completion of agricultural and forestland conservation easements.
 - OFP will pursue funding for the SCC’s farmland preservation account.
 - Tactic: SCC will explore development of a decision package to fund the SCC’s farmland preservation account and increase OFP staff capacity to implement the new program.
 - Tactic: SCC will engage with stakeholders for stakeholder interest in seeking funding for the account.
- Objective: OFP advances innovative tools for farmland protection and land access.
 - Strategy: SCC supports development of new land access tools/programs such as low-interest loans for conservation entities to facilitate Buy-Protect-Sale transactions.
 - Tactic: OFP acts as a program adviser to the newly created FarmPAI program at the Washington State Housing Finance Commission.
 - Tactic: OFP explores other potential mechanisms for resources to facilitate land access.

Guidelines Development

OFP staff developed an outline of the draft guidelines and identified key questions for consideration by SCC staff. Two internal teams formed to advance the guidelines. The first team, the Program Review Team, focused on programmatic questions and considerations (e.g. project selection process and criteria, easement terms, and SCC’s role in transaction). Commissioner Spaeth participated in the Program Review Team in addition to SCC staff. The second team, the Internal Fiscal/Contract Team, focused on contracting and financial process questions. This team consisted of SCC staff.

Staff released the draft guidelines for comment via a GovDelivery announcement on June 8, 2022. Staff also posted the draft guidelines on the SCC website. Comments were due at 5 PM on July 7,

2022. The SCC received responses from four entities. The comments and the SCC's responses are attached to this memo. Staff adjusted the draft guidelines were feasible in response to the comments.

Summary of Proposed Changes:

1. Added RCW 89.08.220 to incorporate conservation districts as eligible entities when they meet other eligibility criteria.
2. Clarified eligible costs:
 - a. Clarified SCC will not pay for any costs that have been paid or will be paid by another funding source such as the FarmPAI program.
 - b. Clarified SCC will not pay for back taxes due on the property.
 - c. Clarified SCC will pay for recording fees.
 - d. Clarified "environmental assessments" paid for by SCC could include Phase I and Phase II assessments.
 - e. Capped the stewardship plan at \$10,000.
3. Removed confusing language about the match requirement.
4. Added requirement that appraised value be included in the Purchase and Sale Agreement.
5. Added more detail to application questions to better prompt applicants to submit all necessary information.
6. Clarified projects must follow state's record retention schedule.
7. Clarified deadline for project completion.
8. Added a requirement in the application to show documentation that both the buyer and seller are aware of the application.
9. Clarified monitoring reports must be submitted on an annual basis.

Additional Documents:

- Revised FPLA Program Guidelines, July 2022 DRAFT (attached)
- FPLA Application Form (see form: <https://www.formstack.com/forms/?4833834-bljTMXOAsX>)
- FPLA Program Guidelines Feedback and Response Tracker (attached)

Recommended Action and Options:

Staff recommend the following action:

SCC staff request the Commission approves the revised "FPLA Program Guidelines, July 2022 Draft" as the final FPLA Program Guidelines for use with funds provided in the 2022 Supplemental Capital budget.

Next Steps:

Contingent on Commissioner approval, staff will open the program for applications in August 2022.

FPLA Program Guidelines Feedback and Repsonse Tracker - July 2022

Response #	Comment Date	Organization	Commenter	Section	Comment	Response
1	30-Jun	Skagit Conservation District	Alexandra James	Section 1: Introduction	No comments/suggestions	
				Section 2: General Policies	<p>Suggestion 1: Include summary of funding timeframe (i.e., state when funds are available and frequency of availability). Funding information is mentioned elsewhere in the guidelines but it may be appropriate to add a brief summary statement under this section as well. Alternatively, a statement on how and when the funds must be spent may be helpful (e.g., funds must be spent within 3 years of obligation or something to that effect) if such parameters exist. If they don't exist, SCC may want to consider such parameters to include project progression.</p> <p>Suggestion 2: Include summary on funding parameters (e.g., what expenses can be covered by grant funding). There's an entire section on this but it may be helpful to include a brief statement under general policies or to reference the section 4 to direct prospective applicants to the funding parameters.</p> <p>Suggestion 3: Include statement on timeframe for application review (e.g., applicants will be notified of funding determination within 30 days of application submission). This may be more appropriate under section 3 "Application Process" but it may be appropriate to restate how long the review process will take under general policies.</p> <p>Suggestion 4: Include link to any review rubric or form that will be used to document application review comments/scores.</p> <p>Suggestion 5: Include brief statement on the contracting document/cooperative agreement to be used to set up funding arrangement.</p>	<p>Re: Suggestion 1: Thank you for this feedback. SCC currently has one time funding for this program. We will consider this suggestion for inclusion if the program receives ongoing funding.</p> <p>Re: Suggestion 2: Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>Re: Suggestion 3: Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>Re: Suggestion 4: Thank you for your comment. Applications will be assessed based on the responses submitted with the application form and the prioritization criteria included in Section 3.</p> <p>Re: Suggestion 5: Thank you for your comment.</p>
				Section 3: Application Process	<p>Comments/suggestions for guidelines content:</p> <p>Suggestion 1: Add statement on how the review committee plans to review applications (e.g., rubric involved? scoring/ranking involved? eligibility determinations?). Also, add information on the review timeline (e.g., when can applicants expect to learn of a funding determination after submitting an application? How will they learn this information?).</p> <p>Comments/suggestions for application:</p> <p>Suggestion 1: Add length parameters to questions or set a character limit. For example, add "answer in 1-2 paragraphs or 3-4 sentences" to set length parameters, or set a 700 character limit to answer box that is visible to applicant. I've found that adding length parameters/character limits helps applicants decide what level of detail is appropriate. Such parameters also help applicants be more concise and efficient with their answers. Also, length parameters may help reviewers with appropriate level of understanding that will aid in funding determinations/scoring.</p> <p>Suggestion 2: Some farms may not have a property address, only a legal description. Consider adding "or legal description" if property address is unavailable.</p> <p>Suggestion 3: Help the applicant help the review committee by clarifying what information is appropriate for the general site description. Are you looking for soil classification, resource concerns, topography, crop types, etc.? If there is anything specific you're wanting to know, ask for that information to be included in the description.</p> <p>Suggestion 4: Consider asking about current and/or transitional ownership.</p> <p>Suggestion 5: Consider asking about a project timeline. This demonstrates that the applicant has a plan and has considered how this funding fits into the overall project.</p> <p>Suggestion 6: Consider asking applicant to provide a copy of the purchase and sale agreement or a letter of intent. This demonstrates that conversations have occurred and that the parties involved agree to working together on this project.</p> <p>Suggestion 7: Consider asking applicant to provide proof of the entity's ability to hold an agricultural conservation easement. This may include administrative capability, staffing capability, and stewardship capability.</p>	<p>Re: Suggestion 1, Guidelines Content: Thank you for your comment. The review committee will first determine whether an applicant is eligible based on the eligibility criteria and then will assess the project based on the prioritization criteria.</p> <p>Re: Suggestion 1, Application: Thank you for your comment. We've added length parameters to certain questions and added more detail on the type of information we're looking for.</p> <p>Re: Suggestion 2, Application: Thank you for your comment. We ask for the tax parcel numbers rather than a legal description.</p> <p>Re: Suggestion 3, Application: Thank you for your comment. We added more detail to the type of information we're looking for.</p> <p>Re: Suggestion 4, Application: Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>Re: Suggestion 5, Application: Thank you for your comment. We added a question about the project timeline.</p> <p>Re: Suggestion 6, Application: Thank you for your comment. We added a question asking for a letter of intent or PSA relative to the fee simple acquisition funded by FarmPAL.</p> <p>Re: Suggestion 7, Application: Applicants must show they are eligible to hold easements at the beginning of the application and they must be, or be working with, an accredited land trust or member of WALT.</p>
				Section 4: Eligible Costs	Suggestion 1: Explain/clarify how applicants request reimbursement for individual costs or bulk costs. Do they submit receipts? Do they make one reimbursement request or are multiple requests preferred?	Thank you for your comment. The reimbursement process is outlined in our grants and procedures manual.
				Section 5: Easement Terms and Requirements	Suggestion 1: State or clarify when the easement must close, or if there is no deadline requirement, state when SCC would prefer for the easement to close. If the easement is not closed within the required/preferred timeline, will SCC consider an extension? If so, what does that process look like?	Thank you for your comment.
2	7-Jul	American Farmland Trust	Dani Madrone	Section 1: Introduction	We have reviewed the draft guidelines and offer a suggestion for the application process. We are excited about this program and look forward to supporting the process!	Thank you for your comment.
				Section 2: General Policies	n/a	
				Section 3: Application Process	<p>The application asks: "If the future owner has not been identified, describe the proposed process for identifying and selecting the future owner."</p> <p>This section should ask the applicant to affirm they will prioritize at least one of the categories identified in the guidelines. It should also ask that they describe the policies they have in place to institutionalize a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in their land trust.</p>	Thank you for your comment. We incorporated the suggested changes.

Response #	Comment Date	Organization	Commenter	Section	Comment	Response
				Section 4: Eligible Costs	n/a	
				Section 5: Easement Terms and Requirements	n/a	
3	7-Jul	North Olympic Land Trust	Michael Auger	Section 1: Introduction	<p>Very good background information including details about SCC, OFP and the budget proviso language. The definitions section is especially helpful.</p> <p>Thanks for the opportunity to comment. Given deadlines and our staff availability in late June (Land Camp), July (summer vacations) and our re-accreditation process, if there's an opportunity to expand upon these comments in the future, we'd be open to providing more information if helpful, if you'd like.</p> <p>We deeply appreciate the opportunity FPLA provides to Land Trusts as part of the Buy, Protect, Sell process by complimenting FarmPAI. Buy, Protect, Sell is a very important tool for land trusts to quickly take threatened farmland off the open market, permanently protect it, then sell it to farmers. Together, FarmPAI and FPLA provide critical assistance to land trusts to save important farmland.</p> <p>Our major overall concern to date regarding the FPLA process is regarding farmland affordability provisions. To our knowledge, no one in Washington State has figured out an ideal option, especially with our state's "rule against perpetuities". It would be great if FPLA could help all of Washington figure out some good affordability tools that we could all use.</p> <p>Possible options might include a "preferential right of first refusal" tied to a certain timeframe such as 10 years, and then at that time, a land trust could come in at 90% of an offer, and they could also transfer this right of first refusal to a farmer. That adds 10% of value to the easement at the time.</p> <p>Homesize restrictions might help easement value, but in recent cases, they have not impacted value significantly. Also, in general, land trusts seem to want to avoid mandated agricultural use.</p>	Thank you for your comments. We were intentionally vague in the discussion of affordability provisions so that we could allow exploration of different options. We agree this is a topic that warrants further investigation and the SCC is interested in helping move that conversation forward.
				Section 2: General Policies	Clear and concise. The cultural resources review portion is very helpful.	Thank you for your comment.
				Section 3: Application Process	The application process, including the application form is very straightforward and simple.	Thank you for your comment.
				Section 4: Eligible Costs	<p>We're very pleased FPLA does not require match funding.</p> <p>Under "environmental assessment" does that include both Phase I and Phase II assessments?</p> <p>Uncertain what "using FPLA funding pursuant to the applicable records retention schedule" is. Are you referring to each land trust's individual record's policies?</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>Re: "Environmental assessments." Yes, this could include both Phase I and Phase II assessments as long as both were budgeted for at the time of the application. We added that clarification to the guidelines.</p> <p>Re: Records retention. We clarified we are referring to the state's record retention schedules.</p>
				Section 5: Easement Terms and Requirements	<p>Regarding the SCC Monitoring Report, you may want to include a section for Property Address.</p> <p>Taking new photo point photos each time the property is monitored (so at least once a year for Land Trusts), even if nothing has changed, seems a bit excessive, especially as each photo needs to be digitally stored in perpetuity</p> <p>I don't see a deadline for when the monitoring reports need to be submitted annually?</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>Re: The suggested changes to the SCC Monitoring Report Template: Good suggestions. We will consider both suggestions at our next opportunity to update our monitoring report template.</p> <p>Re: Timeline for monitoring: Yes, reports need to be submitted annually. We've added that clarification.</p>

Response #	Comment Date	Organization	Commenter	Section	Comment	Response
				Section 1: Introduction	<p>Historically underserved producer Historically Underserved Producer- Are you referring to an entire tribe or an individual member of an Indian tribe? Would all members of the tribe be required to participate in the daily operation?</p> <p>In this context it appears that a veteran farmer does not have to also be a beginning farmer because they are considered a historically underserved producer not matter, correct?</p> <p>Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher Means- I'm not sure it's worth bringing this question forward, but wouldn't a farm where the income keeps the family at the poverty level be considered unviable? How likely are these farms to remain viable over time?</p> <p>Socially Disadvantaged Farmer- So this group does not include those who might have a disability of some kind or have a different sexual orientation? It does seem like we miss that nexus of discrimination through the federal definitions. However, I think using a consistent definition that is well-recognized at the federal level is prudent for this process.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. Per the direction provided in the proviso language, these definitions are derived from 7 24 C.F.R Section 1470.3 (2022) with additional detail added where noted provided by the USDA NRCS Outreach and Advocacy definitions.</p>
				Section 2: General Policies	<p>Grant and Contract Procedure Manual- Probably a moot point right now, but FarmPAI is open to accredited organizations which could include entities that don't meet definition of RCW 64.04.130. So perhaps "or either". Also, might want to check RCO requirements on partnerships and when all partners have to be a party to the agreement.</p> <p>Eligible Applicants- So essentially there will be few if any applicants that would be using this fund source to match RCO's farmland program, correct? Or are you thinking that the typical scenario would be that an applicant would first acquire an easement with FarmPAI and FPLA and then to repay the FarmPAI program they would apply for RCO grant funds at a later date? That would mean that RCO would likely need to complete a Waiver of Retroactivity (means sponsor can acquire land right but still request RCO funds after the fact to help pay for the easement) in order for these funds to be used as match in most instances- RCO's waiver process for farmland projects involves RCO participating in the easement development, then RCO signs the easement even if there are no RCO funds provided at that point. Included in the easement would be a statement that if RCO provides funding by XX date then we are a 3rd party, but if we don't then we aren't. Is this something that is going to work with both the FarmPAI and FPLA programs?</p> <p>Cultural Resources Review- I'm not certain, but I thought that if the state provided funds to a non-state entity then the state agency is technically the lead for cultural resources. If RCO funds are used after the fact, (such as the case where RCO provides a waiver) then we wouldn't be participating in cultural until after an easement is signed and executed... so then RCO would not be lead. In this instance would SCC serve as the lead for cultural reviews?</p>	<p>Re: Grant and Contract Procedure Manual - Thank you for this comment. We updated the guidelines to include RCW 89.08.220.</p> <p>Re: RCO Farmland funds could be matched to FPLA funds for the easement acquisition.</p> <p>Re: Cultural Resources: Thank you for your comment. What is written in the guidelines aligns with current SCC guidance.</p>
				Section 3: Application Process	<p>Application Timeline- I like the rolling process. I would very much like to know how this works out for you.</p> <p>Selection Process- At some point are you going to require a landowner notification statement? That's some kind of documentation that the landowner has been informed that an entity is applying for state grant funds in order to purchase some of their property rights. Believe it or not, we have had applicants try to apply for grant funds and not inform the landowner. This causes all sorts of political problems with local officials and/or landowners fearing a private property rights taking.</p> <p>Likewise it is really helpful to require applicants to notify the county or local government of their intent to purchase property rights that would lessen their tax base in their jurisdiction. RCO has seen some instances where local governments were not informed and then the project is pulled by the local officials from funding. Just something to consider.</p> <p>Prioritization Criteria- Do you give any preference to land that is adjacent to or in close proximity to other conserved land?</p> <p>Might be a minority of people who have already identified a future owner, regardless of their identity. Is there a way to be clear that this would not preclude funding consideration, but you should have a clear and compelling process for selecting the future owner, and it would be prioritized lower all else being equal?</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>Re: Landowner notification statement. We added a requirement to upload either the PSA or a letter of intent for the fee simple acquisition.</p> <p>Re: Notifying the county: Thank you for your comment. Agricultural conservation easements are unlikely to impact tax collection as the properties are typically already enrolled in the current use program.</p> <p>Re: Preference for proximity to other conserved land: Thank you for the suggestion. We've added that to the application.</p> <p>Re: Future owners: Thank you for your comment. We added more detail to this question on the application.</p>

Response #	Comment Date	Organization	Commenter	Section	Comment	Response
4	7-Jul	Recreation and Conservation Office	Kim Sellers and Nick Norton	Section 4: Eligible Costs	<p>I don't see anything about the signed agreement and grant performance period and possibility for extensions. Is that in the procedure manual?</p> <p>Eligible Costs- Just note that some of these will/might end up getting covered by FarmPAI appreciation based on that agreement. Might just be an internal issue, but might want to call it out here that you will not double pay. RCO does allow reimbursement of attorney fees for easements only. You may be considering them admin costs. Are you intending this to refer to sales taxes, or are you considering back taxes owed on the property at the time the easement is acquired? We get this question frequently. RCO does not allow for payment of back taxes.</p> <p>Grant Limits and Match- Technically, if the funds are used to pay for something that is ineligible, then it's not actually "match." I will note that in SRFB, applicants are provided the opportunity to report additional funds that are being leveraged for the project but that are not being reporting as match (though would be eligible). This helps for future advocacy to demonstrate local and federal leverage to legislators and decision-makers.</p> <p>Payment to escrow- Do "closing costs" include recording fees?</p> <p>Reimbursable Costs- Maybe I'm thinking of RCO's process where all eligible costs are reimbursed after the fact, but it's confusing to me what the difference is between reimbursable costs, eligible costs, and the list of items below that sponsors must provide documentation regarding. Maybe a new section title after this: "Closing and Escrow"</p> <p>RCO caps stewardship plans at \$10K.</p> <p>Are you considering hazardous substances and/or contaminated soils in some way? RCO includes these in the easement language, so perhaps you will be doing the same?</p> <p>Will you require the PSA to include a notice of just compensation of the appraised value? Most State agencies require the landowner be informed of the appraised value (ie DNR, WDFW, RCO, State Parks...)</p> <p>So you must have a situation where you do not require applicants include you as a 3rd party beneficiary</p> <p>Appraisal Requirements- Were there substantive changes to this such that it wouldn't work to just say "subject to the appraisal requirement in RCO Manual 3: Section 5"?</p> <p>Encumbrances- Oh, that's good to include that! So they would discover those encumbrances when they inspect the property? Or would there be a survey? I'm thinking of illegal or accidental encroachments.</p> <p>Appraisal Shelf Life- Why is it that you are allowing the appraisals to be used after 24 months but you won't reimburse? Are you thinking of this in the case of a signed PSA stopping the clock?</p> <p>Additional Note: This is a common lament among land trusts that agencies don't allow for reimbursement for up-front valuations like market analysis or desktop appraisals, and also won't cover updated appraisal. So this puts them in a bind, whereby if they want an accurate valuation for application and a current appraisal for closing, they are gonna be on the hook out of their own pockets.</p> <p>Appraisal Reviews- What about appraisals, do they have to be field inspections too?</p>	<p>Re: Signed Agreement and performance period: We added detail on when funds must be spent and the potential for an extension.</p> <p>Re: Costs covered by FarmPAI: Good point. We've clarified we will not double pay.</p> <p>Re: taxes: Yes, we are referring to sales tax. We clarified we will not pay for back taxes.</p> <p>Re: match: We've clarified this section to remove confusion about what is considered match.</p> <p>Re: closing costs: Yes, closing costs include recording fees. We updated this language to improve clarity.</p> <p>Re: cost categories: Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>Re: cap for stewardship plans - Thank you for this suggestion. We have included a \$10k cap.</p> <p>Re: Hazardous substances: Yes, we will will cover the cost for environmental assessments and would require the environmental warranty language used by NRCS or RCO.</p> <p>Re: PSA and just compensation: Good point, we've added that.</p> <p>Re: Third-party beneficiary. Yes, there may be situations where the SCC would defer third-party rights of enforcement to another agency (e.g. county government, NRCS, or RCO).</p> <p>Re: Referencing RCO Manual 3, Section 5: While the information is largely the same, by including these requirements in the Program Guidelines we can remove reference to RCO and streamline some of the information.</p> <p>Re: Encumbrances: This is RCO's current language. The new encumbrances would be identified through the final title report.</p> <p>Re: Appraisal Shelf Life: This is RCO's current language.</p> <p>Re: Appraisal Reviews: We are following RCO's current language that differentiates between projects under \$250,000 from projects over \$250,000.</p>
				Section 5: Easement Terms and Requirements	<p>This is the section where I have the most concerns. If WSCC is committed to equitable access, then I think there needs to be renewed consideration of how the easement terms and/or requirements would create a capacity burden that is not absolutely necessary to preserve the public benefit.</p> <p>RCO and NRCS templates are probably the most detailed and onerous out there. This is a rare opportunity to get away from that and strive for flexibility and compatibility; I would think you want this funding source to not be the squeaky wheel. What about an easement that only uses conservation futures as match; would that also work to leverage the local template?</p> <p>At this point, RCO does not require that applicants use RCO's template, but instead they need to demonstrate that the replacement easement meets the terms of our template. I think this option will remain once RCO revises our template in the near future. Leaving the door open for an individual option that preserve the core terms is important.</p> <p>Both RCO and NRCS base the repayment on the value of the land at the time of the extinguishment, with a ratio of underlying land to easement value remaining constant over time. RCO's easement also allows for the replacement of in kind land approved by our board. Does the SCC want to accept that part of RCO's easement language?</p> <p>Note that NRCS easement does not allow for condemnation. Also, RCO has the option to amend an easement without a judge's approval, but to completely extinguish an easement requires a judge ruling.</p> <p>What does the affordability provisions include? RCO's easement template does include a statement that says essentially that the easement can not be extinguished just because it is more financially advantageous to exit the easement and use the land for non ag related uses.</p> <p>Might want to include some resources here. Also, I think a deeper cross-walk might be in order here with RCO re: affordability provisions. For example, if someone inserts an OPAV, then it could bring up issues of merger. We are trying to get a AAG determination on that issue relative to BPS, but those kind of things are red flags for RCO at the moment.</p>	<p>Re: Template flexibility. We also desire to maintain flexibility. Given the SCC was awarded one time funding, we do not have the resources or time required to develop our own template nor do we have the resources necessary to review stand alone easements on a case by case basis. We will explore this option if we receive additional funding in the future for a sustainable program.</p> <p>Re: Repayment: Thank you for this comment. We are aware and would like to align with RCO's process in the future. However, the proviso provided specific direction regarding repayment that we must follow.</p> <p>Re: Condemnation and amendment: Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>Re: Conservation Futures templates. Thank you for this idea. This could be considered for the future. At this time, we cannot include this option as we do not have enough information about which Conservation Futures programs have agricultural conservation easement templates or on the substance of those templates.</p> <p>Re: Affordability provisions: Thank you for your comments. We were intentionally vague in the discussion of affordability provisions so that we could allow exploration of different options. We agree this is a topic that warrants further investigation and the SCC is interested in helping move that conversation forward. We are pleased to learn RCO is researching OPAV. The SCC would like to work in partnership with you on this.</p>



Farmland Protection and Land Access Program Guidelines - DRAFT

July 2022, DRAFT

Deleted: June

Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction.....	3
Agency Overview	3
Office of Farmland Preservation Overview.....	4
Program Overview	4
Budget Proviso	5
Definitions.....	6
Section 2: General Policies	8
Grant and Contract Procedure Manual.....	8
Eligible Applicants	8
Cultural Resources Review.....	8
Section 3: Application Process.....	9
Application Timeline	9
Selection Process	9
Submitting an Application	9
Budget Elements.....	10
Section 4: Eligible Costs, Reimbursement Process, and Record Requirements	11
SCC Grants and Contracts Policies.....	11
Funding Availability	11
Cost Increases	11
Grant Limits and Match Requirement	11
Method of Grant Payment.....	12
Record Keeping & Audits	13
Appraisal Requirements.....	13
Section 5: Easement Terms and Requirements.....	17
Easement Review and Approval by SCC	17
Easement Monitoring	17
Easement Terms	17

Section 1: Introduction

Agency Overview

The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) is the coordinating state agency for all 45 conservation districts (CDs) in Washington state.

Together, the SCC and CDs provide voluntary, incentive-based programs that empower conservation and ensure healthy natural resources and agriculture for all.

What We Do

- Provide financial and operational support and oversight to our state's 45 conservation districts.
- Design policy and program structures that can be customized to address site-specific natural resource conditions and landowner needs.
- Facilitate collaborative solutions that meet state natural resource priorities and work on the ground.

What We Believe In

Mission: To conserve natural resources on all lands in Washington state, through voluntary and incentive based programs, in collaboration with conservation districts and other partners.

Vision: Our state shall have healthy soils, water, air, and ecosystems, and sustainable human interaction with these resources, including viable agriculture and forestry. The State Conservation Commission and districts are recognized as trusted partners who promote voluntary stewardship and accomplish natural resource goals.

Values

- **Sustainability:** We envision a future with healthy, diverse landscapes – including viable working lands – voluntarily supported by informed resource stewards
- **Relationships:** We foster strong partnerships with a diversity of stakeholders and maintain open communication and transparency to create trust.
- **Knowledge:** We value local knowledge, diverse cultures, and ideas. We strive to offer voluntary, collaborative solutions that reflect state, local, and community priorities.
- **Accountability:** We employ clear policies, procedures, and performance measures that ensure effective, efficient use of public resources.
- **Respect:** We exhibit personal and institutional integrity for agency members and staff, conservation districts, and our partners.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** We commit to inclusion across gender, race, age, religion, accessibility, identity, veterans status, neurodiversity, and experience to have a culture where all feel included and valued. We believe that diversity drives innovation and our work should reflect the diversity of people across Washington State. We strive to remove barriers that impact equity in our programs and agency.

Agency Structure

The Conservation Commission consists of a 10-member governing board representing Governor appointees, other state agencies, and conservation districts. Our staff carries out the direction of the board, provides direct service to conservation districts, and coordinates the work of the Commission and districts with other natural resource and agricultural partners. While our headquarters office is located in Lacey, we have agency staff in communities around the state, including: Okanogan, Spokane, Goldendale, and Yakima.

Who sits on the SCC Board of Commissioners?

- Four commissioners are appointed to represent state partners (Departments of Ecology, Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources, and Washington State University).
- Two commissioners are appointed by the Governor.
- Three commissioners are current CD board supervisors elected to serve on the Commission by members of the Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD).
- One commissioner is the WACD President.

Office of Farmland Preservation Overview

The Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP) is a program housed within the Washington State Conservation Commission. Through the direction provided by [RCW 89.10.010](#), OFP works to address the rapid loss of working agricultural land in our state. OFP does this by supporting and sponsoring agricultural conservation easements, assisting local governments and organizations as they develop and implement measures to retain agricultural land, providing resources to assist with the transition of farmland and farm business for one generation to the next, and providing data and analysis on trends impacting farmland in Washington.

Program Overview

The Farmland Protection and Land Access (FPLA) program was established via proviso in the Washington State 2022 Supplemental Capital Budget (SSB 5651), Section 3050.

FPLA complements the "Buy-Protect-Sell" category of [FarmPAI](#), a program of the Washington State Housing Finance Commission. FPLA serves the dual purpose of permanently protecting high-quality farmland and facilitating access to land for next generation farmers and ranchers.

FarmPAI provides conservation entities with low-interest loans for the fee-simple acquisition of at-risk farmland. FPLA grants fund the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement. The agricultural conservation easement ensures the land stays open and available for farming in perpetuity. By restricting or removing certain development rights that are incompatible with agriculture, FPLA funded agricultural conservation easements make farmland more affordable for the future farm owner.

Used in conjunction with FarmPAI, the FPLA program will result in the permanent protection of high-quality farmland at imminent risk of development and facilitate transfer to the next generation farmer.

How will partners work together to promote farmland preservation and access, and where does FPLA fit in the process?



Budget Proviso

The proviso language states:

FOR THE STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

2021-2023 Farmland Protection and Land Access (40000020)

The appropriation in this section is subject to the following conditions and limitations: The appropriation is provided solely for the state conservation commission to implement and administer the farmland protection and land access program. In administering this program, the state conservation commission shall support opportunities for all producers but shall prioritize: (a) Conservation of high priority agricultural land at imminent risk of development; and (b) grants for the purchase of agricultural easements to historically underserved producers, as defined in 7 24 C.F.R. Sec. 1470.3 (2022), including young and beginning farmers, people of color, and veterans.

(2) In contracts for grants authorized under this section, the state conservation commission must include provisions that require that easements be held by the grantee for a specified period, appropriate to protect the public investment and to the conservation purpose of the grant. If the state conservation commission finds the grantee to be out of compliance with provisions of the contract, the grantee shall repay to the state general fund the principal amount of the grant plus interest calculated at the rate of interest on state of Washington general obligation bonds issued most closely to the date of authorization of the grant.

Appropriation: State Building Construction Account—State.	\$2,000,000
Prior Biennia (Expenditures).	\$0
Future Biennia (Projected Costs).	\$2,000,000
TOTAL.	\$4,000,000

Definitions

The following definitions are derived from 7 24 C.F.R. Sec. 1470.3 (2022) as required by the Farmland Protection and Land Access budget proviso with additional detail where noted provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Outreach and Advocacy definitions.

Beginning farmer or rancher means a person or legal entity who:

- 1) Has not operated a farm, ranch, or nonindustrial private forestland (NIPF) or who has operated a farm, ranch, or NIPF for not more than 10 consecutive years. The requirement in this paragraph (1) applies to all members of a legal entity who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.
- 2) In the case of a contract with an individual, individually, or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch, consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located.
- 3) In the case of a contract with a legal entity or joint operation, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. Material and substantial participation requires that each of the members provide some amount of the management or labor and management necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if each of the members did not provide these inputs, the operation of the farm or ranch would be seriously impaired.

In the case of a contract made with a legal entity, all members must meet these requirements.

Historically underserved producer means a person, joint operation, legal entity, or Indian Tribe who is a beginning farmer or rancher, socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher, limited resource farmer or rancher, or veteran farmer or rancher.

Limited resource farmer or rancher means

- 1) A person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two fiscal years (adjusted for inflation using "prices paid" by the Farmer Index as compiled by the National Agricultural Statistical Service); and
- 2) Has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years (to be determined annually using Department of Commerce data).
- 3) A limited resource farmer or rancher also includes a legal entity or joint operation if all individual members independently qualify under paragraphs (1) and (2) of this definition.

A self-determination tool is available to the public and may be completed on-line or printed and completed hardcopy at <https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>.

Socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher means a producer who is a member of a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudices without regard to its members' individual qualities. The USDA NRCS further defines **socially disadvantaged** as an individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.

Socially disadvantaged groups consist of the following:

- American Indians or Alaskan Natives
- Asians
- Blacks or African Americans
- Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
- Hispanics

For an entity, at least 50 percent ownership in the farm business must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals

Note: Gender alone is not a covered group for the purposes of NRCS conservation program authorities. The term entities reflect a broad interpretation to include partnerships, couples, legal entities, etc.

Veteran farmer or rancher means a producer who meets the definition in section 2501(a)(7) of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, as amended ([7 U.S.C. 2279](#)). 7.U.S.C. 2279 defines veteran farmer or rancher as a farmer or rancher who has served in the Armed Forces (as defined in SECTION 101(10) OF TITLE 38) and who—

(A) has not operated a farm or ranch;

(B) has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years; or

(C) is a veteran (as defined in section 101 of that title) who has first obtained status as a veteran (as so defined) during the most recent 10-year period.

A legal entity or joint operation can be a Veteran Farmer or Rancher only if all individual members independently qualify.

Section 2: General Policies

Grant and Contract Procedure Manual

Unless explicitly stated in these programmatic guidelines, applicants must follow policies and procedures established in the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) Grant and Contract Procedure Manual.

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible to apply for FPLA, applicant entities must be qualified to hold conservation easements under RCW 64.04.130 or RCW 89.08.220 and either have secured a loan through the “Buy-Protect-Sell” category of FarmPAI or be working in partnership with an entity that has secured a loan through FarmPAI.

Cultural Resources Review

Per the SCC Cultural Resources Review Process instructions, applicants must determine what process to use based on the funding mix and location of their project:

- 1) If federal funds are involved or the project is on Federal or Tribal land, the Section 106 federal review process should be followed. Make sure that it happens and document that on the cultural review complied statement form (form available at the SCC website: <https://www.scc.wa.gov/cd/cultural-resources>).
- 2) If Section 106 is not indicated and non-SCC state funds are involved, the other agency process can be followed. Make sure that it happens and document that on the cultural review complied statement form.
- 3) If SCC is the only state funder and the project is not on Tribal or Federal land then the SCC review process should be used. Per the SCC Cultural Resource Review Process, no cultural resource review would be required.

Section 3: Application Process

Application Timeline

The 2022 FPLA grant cycle opens Aug. 1, 2022. SCC will accept applications on a rolling basis until all funds have been expended during the fiscal year.

Selection Process

The SCC Executive Director or their designee in consultation with the FPLA Work Group will review and recommend projects based on the following criteria:

Eligibility Criteria

- A. Applicant entity must be qualified to hold conservation easements under RCW 64.04.130 or [RCW 89.08.220](#); *and*
- B. Have secured a loan through the Buy-Protect-Sell category of FarmPAI; *or*
- C. Be working in partnership with an entity that has secured a loan through FarmPAI.

Prioritization Criteria

- A. Has the applicant identified a historically underserved producer, young or beginning farmer, person of color, or veteran as the future farm owner?¹
- B. What is the threat of conversion out of agriculture if the easement is not secured?²
- C. What is the opportunity for new or continued natural resource investments on the property?

The FPLA Work Group may include but is not limited to SCC staff and representatives from the following agencies or organizations: Washington State Housing Finance Commission, American Farmland Trust, Washington State Department of Agriculture, and Washington State University Extension. The FPLA Work Group may develop ground rules for operating procedures.

Once the FPLA Work Group recommends a project for funding, the SCC Commissioners will consider the project for approval for funding at a noticed business meeting.

Submitting an Application

All proposals must be entered into [a Formstack application](#) and contain a detailed description of the project and budget.

¹ The FPLA proviso directs the SCC to prioritize: "historically underserved producers, as defined in 7 24 C.F.R. Sec. 1470.3 (2022), including young and beginning farmers, people of color, and veterans."

² The FPLA proviso directs the SCC to prioritize: "conservation of high priority agricultural land at imminent risk of development."

Budget Elements

The following budget items must be included in the budget document you upload in the Formstack application.

PROJECT BUDGET			
Budget Categories	FPLA Request	Match Funding*	Total
Project Costs:			
Appraisal			
Appraisal Review			
Baseline Documentation			
Boundary line adjustments			
Environmental Audits			
Conservation or Stewardship Plan			
Survey			
Projects Costs Sub-Total	\$0	\$0	\$0
Acquisition Costs:			
Easement Purchase Price			
Closing, Recording, Taxes, Title			
Acquisition Costs Sub-Total	\$0	\$0	\$0
Administrative Costs			
Administrative Costs			
Total Project Budget	\$0	\$0	\$0

*Match funding is not required.

To download this budget sheet, visit [here](#):

Section 4: Eligible Costs, Reimbursement Process, and Record Requirements

FPLA funding may be used to purchase an agricultural conservation easement and to cover the related acquisition costs. FPLA funding does not require match funding.

SCC Grants and Contracts Policies

Unless explicitly stated in these programmatic guidelines, all policies and procedures established in the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) Grant and Contract Procedure Manual must be followed.

Eligible costs are limited to the following list:

- Agricultural conservation easement appraisal and review appraisal
- Property or building envelope surveys
- Easement purchase price (not to exceed fair market value as determined by an appraisal and review appraisal)
- Taxes due at closing (compensating, excise and pro rata taxes), title reports and insurance, recording fees. SCC will not pay for delinquent taxes due on the property at the time of closing.
- Environmental assessment (e.g. Phase I and Phase II assessments)
- Baseline Documentation
- Farm or stewardship plan, not to exceed \$10,000
- Boundary line adjustments
- Administrative costs, not to exceed \$50,000 unless approved by the SCC Executive Director or their designee

Deleted: closing costs

Funding Availability

FPLA is currently funded with one-time Supplemental Capital budget funding that must be expended by June 30, 2023. As a result, FPLA funded easements must close and grant agreements be closed out before June 30, 2023. If the project is not completed by June 30, 2023, applicants may apply for a onetime extension if funding is available.

Cost Increases

Any cost increases beyond the budgeted amount will be addressed on a case-by-case basis in consideration of available funds.

Grant Limits and Match Requirement

There is no minimum or maximum grant amount. The applicant is not required to bring match funding to the transaction except, The applicant is responsible for ineligible costs. The SCC does not need documentation of ineligible costs.

Deleted: to cover costs considered ineligible in the FPLA program guidelines

Method of Grant Payment

Payment to Escrow

The following costs are eligible for payment directly to escrow by SCC:

- Easement purchase price
Taxes due at closing (compensating, excise and pro rata taxes), title reports and insurance, recording fees. SCC will not pay for delinquent taxes due on the property at the time of closing.

Deleted: Taxes, title insurance, closing costs¶¶

Reimbursable Costs

The following costs are eligible for reimbursement from the SCC. The FPLA applicant may request reimbursement only after paying employees and vendors for reimbursable costs. The SCC will not pay more than the FPLA applicant's out-of-pocket costs. The SCC will not pay for any costs that have been paid or will be paid by another funding source such as the FarmPAI program. Reimbursement shall not be approved for any donations, including donated land.

- Agricultural conservation easement appraisal and review appraisal
- Property or building envelope surveys
- Environmental assessment
- Baseline Documentation
- Boundary line adjustments
- Farm or stewardship plan, not to exceed \$10,000
- Administrative costs, not to exceed \$50,000 unless approved by the SCC Executive Director or their designee

The FPLA applicant is required to provide the following documentation to the OFP Coordinator, and the SCC Director of Accounting and Budget before the SCC will release funding to escrow.

- a) Appraisal
- b) Review Appraisal
- c) Baseline Documentation including site-specific map and general vicinity map
- d) Title Commitment
- e) Final Conservation Easement Deed Language
- f) Purchase and Sale Agreement
- g) Settlement Statement

Requests for escrow closing funding must be made in writing and submitted directly to SCC Contract Manager and SCC Director of Accounting and Budget. The written request must allow **30 days BEFORE** the intended closing date to ensure SCC has the proper time allowance to work with the Office of the State Treasurer (OST) to prepare wire(s). Information needed in the request must include:

- a) Exact funding amount needed
- b) Date needed
- c) Name of the entity needing to be paid directly,
 - a. bank name,
 - b. ABA or routing number,

- c. name of the account owner,
- d. account number,
- e. effective settlement date (and any other wire instructions pertinent such as property address).

After closing, the easement holder is required to:

- a) Provide notice via email to OFP Coordinator, the SCC Director of Accounting and Budget, and SCC Contract Manager within 5 business days of closing.
- b) Provide an electronic copy of the recorded conservation easement. If the SCC is a third party beneficiary, the land conservation entity must provide annual monitoring reports.

Record Keeping & Audits

The easement holder must retain a complete set of all documents and records pertaining to the purchase of a conservation easement using FPLA funding pursuant to the applicable records retention schedule. See <https://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/recordsmanagement/state-agencies-records-retention-schedules.aspx> for the most recent version of the "State Government General Records Retention Schedule."

All records relevant to projects funded by FPLA must be on file with the grant applicants and are subject to audit by the State and inspection by SCC. If the auditor's inspection of the records discloses any charges incorrectly claimed and reimbursed, cash restitution of the incorrect amount must be made to the SCC.

Appraisal Requirements

Appraisals must be performed by licensed appraisers, must value the exact property rights being acquired, and must be reviewed by a second licensed appraiser.

Just Compensation

SCC determines just compensation to landowners based on appraisals and reviews of those appraisals. The project sponsor first contracts for an appraisal of the property to determine the market value of the property. Secondly, the project sponsor contracts for an independent review of the appraisal to confirm the market value identified in the appraisal. The Purchase and Sale Agreement for the FPLA funded agricultural conservation easement must reference the appraised value in order to provide notice of just compensation to the seller.

Appraisal and Review Appraisal Standards

There are two forms of acceptable appraisal and review appraisal standards depending upon the source of funding for the acquisition project. For projects funded with state money, the project sponsor must instruct the appraiser and review appraiser to use the standards set forth in the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) publication. The appraised market value of the property must be a point value, rather than a value range. (Example: \$257,000 rather than \$240,000 to \$270,000). If a federal funding source requires the applicant to follow the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (aka Yellow Book), SCC will accept appraisals prepared to these standards.

Extraordinary Assumptions and Hypothetical Conditions

All appraisal reports include a statement of assumptions and limiting conditions. In addition, an appraisal may include extraordinary assumptions or hypothetical conditions upon which the appraiser based the market value of the property. Project sponsors should avoid the use of extraordinary assumptions or hypothetical conditions unless consistent with the uniform appraisal standards. If the appraiser uses extraordinary (special) assumptions or hypothetical conditions, the appraiser must clearly state these within the report and must provide a reasonable justification for using them. Additionally, the review appraiser must list all extraordinary assumptions and hypothetical conditions and comment on their reasonableness. If the findings are that the assumptions or conditions are not reasonable, the value of the land may not be supported. SCC may not accept the appraisal and require a new appraisal without unsupported assumptions and conditions.

Encumbrances

When determining the property's market value, the appraiser and review appraiser must consider encumbrances and reservations that will be on the property as it is finally to be conveyed, which may be different than characterized on the preliminary title report. The project sponsor must provide the appraiser and review appraiser with the preliminary title report and the encumbrance documents. In addition, the project sponsor must inform the appraiser of any changes on title to be made up to closing, including encumbrances that will be cleared and any new encumbrances or reservations that are to be created (except for SCC's Deed of Right). SCC may require supplemental information or an appraisal update before reimbursement or the release of escrow funds if the original report does not reflect accurately the encumbrances in place at the time of conveyance.

Appraisal Report Formats

The Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice requires an appraisal report for all appraisal assignments. SCC requires additional documentation beyond the standard Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice appraisal report for certain appraisal problems as described below. In all appraisals using the sales comparison approach, the appraiser shall include a comparable sales adjustment table. SCC has included these requirements to ensure the accountability and transparency of the public's investment.

Appraisals must be reported in a fully self-contained appraisal report format to exceed the requirements outlined in the most current "Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices." The report must describe in detail the information analyzed and the reasoning and methodology that supports any analyses, opinions, and conclusions. The report will be subject to review and the appraiser will be required to clarify any issues in writing. Failure to do so may result in the report being considered unacceptable.

Appraisal Shelf Life & Appraisal Updates

Appraisals are considered valid for one year from the effective or valuation date of the appraisal. Sponsors must either purchase the property or have a signed Purchase and Sale Agreement within one year of the effective date of the appraisal. If the property is not acquired or a Purchase and Sale Agreement is not secured within one year of the effective date of the appraisal, the project sponsor must obtain a new appraisal statement from the appraiser stating that land values have not changed and the appraised value is the same since the effective date of the appraisal. If the appraiser cannot or will not provide such a statement, the project sponsor

must obtain an appraisal update. Costs associated with the appraisal statement may be reimbursed by SCC. The shelf life of an appraisal for any state-funded grant project may not exceed 18 months under any circumstances.

An appraisal update is a new appraisal assignment to the original appraiser that incorporates information and analysis from the original report to get a more current market value. A review appraisal is required for all appraisal updates. Appraisal and review appraisal updates may be reimbursed by SCC. An appraisal update obtained within 24 months of the original appraisal effective date is not considered a new appraisal. For SCC reimbursement purposes, appraisal updates after 24 months are acceptable to determine the market value, but will not be an eligible cost for reimbursement.

Appraisal Reviews

Independent appraisal reviews are required for all appraisals to confirm just compensation for the property. If the original appraisal relies on a timber cruise, other special reports, or research to establish property value, those also must be reviewed. Appraisal reviews must include the following:

- Field inspections of the property and comparable sales when the appraisal sets the property value of the acquisition project at \$250,000 or higher. Desk reviews are acceptable for properties having a value less than \$250,000.
- The review appraiser must comment on whether the following conditions are met:
 - The appraisal is complete within the scope of work applicable and the appraisal assignment.
 - The appraisal met applicable appraisal standards.
 - The appraiser's extraordinary assumptions are reasonable and justified.
 - The appraiser's hypothetical conditions are reasonable and justified.
 - The appraiser's consideration of encumbrances was satisfactory.
 - The appraiser's data and adjustments are adequate and relevant.
 - The appraiser's methods and techniques are appropriate.
 - The appraiser's analysis, opinions, and conclusions are reasonable.
- The review appraiser must approve or reject the value conclusion in the original appraisal.
 - If the review appraiser approves the market value established in the original appraisal, he/she either can acknowledge that the appraisal meets the SCC appraisal guidelines or do the necessary work to bring the original appraisal into compliance. The confirmed market value is the final just compensation for the property.
 - If the review appraiser rejects the value established in the original appraisal, the project sponsor must either instruct the review appraiser to establish a new property value or obtain a new appraisal. The new property value then becomes the just compensation for the property. If the review appraiser previously had conducted a desk review of the property and now is working to establish a new property value, the review appraisal must take the form of a field review.

Third-Party Appraisals

The appraisal and review appraisal must be procured on behalf of the project sponsor. The appraisal and review appraisal may not be procured on behalf of the landowner or other third party with an interest in the sale unless approved by the SCC in advance. If the project sponsor is partnering with a third party (e.g. another organization that is assisting with negotiating the transaction, co-holding rights, or holding third party rights), then the appraisal and appraisal review may be procured on behalf of and authorized by the project sponsor and the third party. The project sponsor must be listed as an intended user of the appraisal.

Appraiser and Review Appraiser Qualifications

Chapter 18.140 Revised Code of Washington, Certified Real Estate Appraiser Act, establishes four certification or license categories.

- State-certified general real estate appraiser (license number begins with 270- 11): Eligible to develop and communicate real estate appraisals of all types of properties.
- State-certified residential real estate appraiser (license number begins with 270-17): Eligible to develop and communicate real estate appraisals of all types of residential property of one to four units without regard to transaction value or complexity and nonresidential property having a transaction value less than \$250,000.
- State licensed real estate appraiser (license number begins with 270-16): Eligible to develop and communicate real estate appraisals of noncomplex, one to four residential units having a transaction value less than \$1 million; complex, one to four residential units having a transaction value less than \$250,000; and nonresidential property having a transaction value less than \$250,000.
- State registered appraiser trainee (license number begins with 100): Eligible to assist certified real estate appraisers while gaining experience. The appraisal or review appraisal also must be signed by a certified real estate appraiser.

Project sponsors must select an appraiser and review appraiser with appropriate certifications or licenses from Washington State to perform appraisal work, unless the appraisal review is conducted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service for a Farmland Preservation Category project. Review appraisers must have an equal or greater license certification than the original appraiser and cannot be selected from the same firm, organization, or agency/sponsor who conducted the original appraisal. Project sponsor staff may perform appraisals or review appraisals if they meet the state licensing requirements. Project sponsor staff may not conduct both the appraisal and appraisal review on the same property. If a staff person is conducting appraisal work on behalf of the project sponsor, he/she may communicate with the independent appraiser in the role as an appraiser, not as the client or the intended user of the appraisal. A staff person functioning as a negotiator with a property owner may not supervise or formally evaluate the performance of any appraiser or review appraiser.

Appraisal Costs

Only one appraisal and one review appraisal for each property is eligible. SCC may approve the cost for a new appraisal and review appraisal on a case-by-case basis in advance. The project sponsor must submit a written request to approve reimbursement for a new appraisal and review that includes adequate justification as to why the new work is required.

Section 5: Easement Terms and Requirements

Easement Review and Approval by SCC

Applicants are required to submit the conservation easement draft to the OFP for review a minimum of 45 days prior to anticipated closing. Once OFP reviews and accepts the easement, approval must be obtained from the Conservation Commission for final signature.

Easement Monitoring

Easements must be monitored by the easement holder or their designee for compliance on an annual basis. Annual monitoring reports must be submitted on an annual basis via email to the OFP. Applicants may use the [SCC Monitoring Report](#) template or their own monitoring template if it incorporates the same information as the SCC Monitoring template. If an applicant chooses to use their own template, it must be approved by the OFP.

Easement Terms

Base Easement

Applicants are required to use either the NRCS ACEP-ALE [Minimum Deed Terms](#) or the RCO [Agricultural Conservation Easement template](#).

Farm or Stewardship Plan

Easements must include a provision requiring the existence of a farm or stewardship plan. The farm or stewardship plan must be updated when there is a significant change in production practices or in farm ownership.

Third-Party Right of Enforcement

A qualified government entity is required to hold a third party right of enforcement on FPLA funded easements. SCC will hold the third-party right unless an alternative third party is identified and agreed on by all parties. The third-party beneficiary must sign the easement document. As previously stated, project applicants must submit the draft language to SCC for approval before executing the easement.

Repayment Due to Extinguishment or Condemnation

Per the FPLA proviso, in the event of easement extinguishment or condemnation, the grantee shall repay to the state general fund the principal amount of the grant plus interest calculated at the rate of interest on state of Washington general obligation bonds issued most closely to the date of authorization of the grant.

Affordability Provisions

Applicants are encouraged to consider including affordability provisions in the easement to support continued agricultural production.

Variances

Requested variances to these documents may be granted on a case-by-case basis. Applicants should be aware variances may extend the time required for completion of the easement. The SCC reserves the right to propose additional easement terms based on the variance requested.

DRAFT



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Chris Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Bill Eller, VSP Coordinator

SUBJECT: Comments received on proposed Voluntary Stewardship Program
Supplemental Budget Guidelines and Adoption of the Guidelines

Action Item

X

Informational Item

Summary:

The Conservation Commission (Commission) received \$3,000,000 in supplemental capital funding for FY 21-23. Commission staff drafted guidelines for the use of these funds for Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)-related cost-share projects. After presentation of the draft guidelines at a May 25, 2022 meeting, the Commission solicited comments from the VSP Technical Panel, Statewide Advisory Committee, and VSP stakeholders through July 1, 2022. Comments received are documented in this memo and were incorporated into the final version of the guidelines presented today to the Commission for approval.

Requested Action:

Motion to approve staff recommended amended guidelines and adoption of the final version.

Staff Contact:

Bill Eller, VSP Coordinator, 509-385-7512, beller@scc.wa.gov

Background:

The Commission administers the VSP, and is responsible for VSP funding for counties to implement the program. The Commission currently provides \$235,000 for the biennium to each VSP county to implement VSP. The Commission recommends each county use those funds to hire an FTE to implement VSP at the local level, and to achieve statutory and contractual obligations. A portion of those funds may be used to implement VSP-related cost-share projects, but counties are cautioned in the use of cost-share funds to ensure they can still meet their statutory and contractual VSP implementation obligations. As a result, most counties do not use the \$235,000 for VSP cost-share projects.

During the 2022 legislative session, for the first time in program history, the Commission received \$3,000,000 in supplemental capital funding for VSP for FY 21-23. Commission staff drafted guidelines for the use of these funds for VSP-related cost-share projects.

Since the funds received from the legislature were capital funds, and given the interactions that Commission policy staff had with the legislature during the 2022 legislative session, Commission staff incorporated salmon-centric themes in the draft guidelines.

Commission staff presented the draft guidelines to the Commission at its May 19, 2022 regular meeting. At that time, the Commission directed staff to solicit comments on the draft guidelines from VSP stakeholders through July 1, 2022. Commission staff presented the draft guidelines to VSP stakeholders at a May 25, 2022 virtual informational meeting. Commission staff also presented the draft guidelines to the VSP Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee at their June 9, 2022 joint meeting. Comments received, with Commission staff responses, are documented below.

Comment and Input on Proposed Guidelines:

The proposed guidelines reflect the recommendations and comments of a number of different VSP stakeholders, including:

- VSP Technical Panel members, which include state agency staff from the Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Washington State Department of Ecology
- VSP Statewide Advisory Committee members, which include representatives from the Washington Farm Bureau, Western Washington Agricultural Association, Washington State Association of Counties, and County Commissioners from Skagit and Stevens counties
- Commission staff
- Conservation District (CD) staff
- CD Managers
- CD Supervisors

Proposed Changes

Most comments were directed at the salmon-centric nature of the proposed guidelines, and the change to the structure of the *Funding Criteria* in Section 5. This change softens the requirement that projects address salmon habitat resource needs/impacts by requiring only that proposed projects “seek to” address salmon habitat resource needs/impacts.

Another change was to specifically identify and expand the entities identified in RCW 77.95.060 to include regional fisheries enhancement groups, a lead entity, or by a state agency or tribe.

Neither of the two proposals change the substance or intent of the guidelines. The changes were made in response to VSP stakeholder, Technical Panel, Statewide Advisory Committee, and Commission staff comment and input. The recommended changes are proposed in order to improve clarity. The changes made do not change the substance or intent of the rule. Those

changes are highlighted in the attached guidelines. If adopted by the Commission, the final version of the guidelines will reflect those changes.

Comments Received

Nine persons submitted ten written comments using our online comment form. One person affiliated with two different conservation districts submitted two comments (Comment 8 and 9). Table 1 below lists the commenters and the reference number(s) for the comments submitted. All comments along with the Commission's responses follow Table 1. The text in all comments below is exactly as submitted to the Commission.

Table 1 – Commenters and Reference Number

Commenter	Affiliation	Designation	Reference Number
Barbara Adkins	Mason	CD Manager	Comment 1
Natalie Otto	Grays Harbor	CD staff	Comment 2
Lorenzo Churape	Pacific	CD staff	Comment 3
Kenna Fosnacht	Lewis County	CD staff	Comment 4
Megan Stewart	Asotin County	CD Manager	Comment 5
Bradley Johnson	Whitman	CD staff	Comment 6
Carolyn Kelly	South Douglas	CD Supervisor	Comment 7
Mark Nielson	Franklin	CD Manager	Comment 8
Mark Nielson	Benton	CD Manager	Comment 9
Sean Williams	Thurston (WDFW)	State agency staff	Comment 10

Comment Reference Number 1

Commenter: Mason CD Manager

Type: Formal comment through our online comment form, May 24, 2022

Comment: How will the landowner identities be protected through the public meeting process? Is there a limit of funding per County?

Response: Thank you for your comments. The VSP supplemental funding guidelines supplement the Commission's grants and cost-share procedures outlined in the [Commission's Grant and Contract Procedures Manual](#). Landowner confidentiality is addressed in that Manual, and the process wouldn't be any different than the process a conservation district currently uses with any other Commission grant or cost-share program (for example, NRI, Shellfish, etc.). Under the guidelines as proposed, there is no limit of funding per county, meaning that funding will be available for any qualifying project, regardless of county of origin, until it runs out.

Comment Reference Number 2

Commenter: Grays Harbor CD staff

Type: Formal comment through our online comment form, June 9, 2022

Comment: I understand that for the supplemental budget the workgroup needs to approve the project prior to submitting it on CPDS, and that there needs to be proof of this approval in the application - my concern is what this proof is - if it is the meeting minutes, that would require waiting another whole month, until the next workgroup meeting when they can approve the minutes from the previous meeting. I am new to the role of VSP specialist so maybe there is an easy way around

this and I just don't know - such as creating some sort of document I can just have the chair sign off on at the meeting where I ask them to approve putting a project into CPDS? Would something like that be acceptable "proof" of approval?

Response: Thank you for your comment. The Conservation Practice Database System (CPDS) will be modified so that those who are inputting a project into the CPDS system can self-certify that the VSP work group has given its approval for this project during an open, public meeting. This will place the VSP supplemental funding guidelines in line with other Commission grant programs.

Comment Reference Number 3

Commenter: Pacific CD staff

Type: Formal comment through our online comment form, June 9, 2022

Comment: One of the requirements for adding a project into CPDS is to upload proof (minutes) that the project was approved at a workgroup meeting. However, minutes do not get approved until the next meeting. Meeting dates vary for each work group, which can significantly increase the time needed to complete projects. I would suggest having some other form of proof or getting rid of that requirement.

Additionally, the VSP Supplemental budget does not have a proviso that specifically says the money has to benefit salmon. The Salmon Recovery Funds do have that proviso. Why are the supplemental budget funds getting extra criteria to require salmon benefits? This makes the supplemental budget more like the salmon recovery funds, which get more money than vsp anyway. The salmon benefit criteria are restricting what can and can't be done with VSP money. I would suggest having the supplemental budget go towards the usual scope of work done by VSP. In reality, all work done by VSP should benefit salmon directly or indirectly. I feel there is no need to restrict the activities that can be done with the extra VSP supplemental budget. We need to spend that money. There is work that needs to be done. Let us do it with that money. There will also need to be an additional tab under the funding section specifically for the vsp supplemental budget funds, rather than the existing vsp allocation, which will allow us to answer the extra questions. However, removing the extra salmon benefit requirement could decrease the amount of questions as well. Thank you.

Response: Thank you for your comments. Please see the answer to Comment #2, above. As for the salmon-centric focus of the guidelines, since the funds received from the legislature were capital funds, and given the interactions that Commission policy staff had with the legislature during the 2022 legislative session, Commission staff incorporated salmon-centric themes in the draft guidelines to give effect to our understanding of those interactions. The salmon-centric theme has been restructured in the guidelines so that projects must seek to address salmon habitat resource needs/impacts, but if a project doesn't, it no longer will be disqualified from eligibility, but will not rank as high as others.

Comment Reference Number 4

Commenter: Lewis County CD staff

Type: Formal comment through our online comment form, June 28, 2022

Comment: Since VSP Work Groups only meet a few times a year, it would be helpful to have the ability to create a subcommittee that could approve projects between meetings. This would make it easier to meet the timeline to implement projects. Secondly, it would be beneficial for the VSP funding to also support BMPs for nutrient management. This would benefit salmon habitat and critical areas by reducing nutrient pollution in waterways. Some of these practices would include waste storage facilities (313) and composting facilities (317).

Response: Thank you for your comment. For recordkeeping and auditing purposes, the full VSP work group will need to approve of a project before it is submitted. However, under these guidelines, a sub-committee of the county work group could meet to develop projects before being approved by the full work group. So long as the project meets the required funding criteria set out in the guidelines, it will be eligible for funding. Those projects meeting some or all of the additional criteria will benefit by scoring more points and will have a greater chance of being funded.

Comment Reference Number 5

Commenter: Asotin County CD Manager

Type: Formal comment through our online comment form, June 30, 2022

Comment: Overall Program

These guidelines fit this new funding into the commission's current funding structure. That does not seem to be the most efficient way to handle this new money. I would like to see the commission investigate providing funding on a grant basis like Ecology and RCO where the money can cross biennium and fiscal years. If the focus is on salmon habitat, one year funding is not adequate, that only gives us one fish work window to do instream habitat work, which comes at the beginning of the fiscal year. As the guidelines are currently written, only instream projects that we have already planned and permitted could be funded. In that case we also already have the funding to implement those projects. Because of the timing restrictions the money will not impact salmon habitat as effectively as it could.

A big shot of money in 12 months is not an effective way to get conservation on the ground. We need time to develop projects and allocate time to the additional workload associated with these types of projects. For better or worse there are a lot of environmental compliance requirements that must be completed for a project to be implemented. Those requirements cannot be completed overnight. The funding timeline is July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023. That is a very tight timeline that limits our ability to implement these projects. One year is not enough to take a project from start to finish anymore. Between Cultural Resources, permitting, and planning it takes about 1 year to get a project ready for construction. The way this is being setup only projects that we already have lined up will fit the timeline.

Specific Comments on the Proposed Guidelines

Why do projects have to address salmon habitat? We understand the connection with HB1838, and support prioritizing salmon related projects for that reason. However, this funding is for VSP, and we cannot ignore the purpose of VSP. Projects need to tie back to the Work Plan, if salmon habitat

is identified in the work plan as a goal, then it is an appropriate project for VSP. However, these funds should not be restricted to only salmon projects. VSP work plans have many other goals that should not be ignored. The legislature is providing \$3,000,000 from the State Building Construction Account for VSP, not for salmon habitat resource needs. We can report of all projects that do impact salmon habitat but that should not be a requirement of the funds.

Under the current policy in the "Grant and Contract Procedure Manual" producers are limited to \$50,000 across all programs. This could limit our ability to effectively use this money in the timeframe proposed. Furthermore, this limit has not been updated in many years, \$50,000 does not buy what it did 10 years ago. "Funding in excess of \$50,000 may be requested and will be considered for funding on a case-by-case basis." In general, we support flexibility in funding guidelines, but in this case, it makes it more challenging for Districts to plan and implement projects in a short timeline if we don't have clear guidelines.

How does WSCC track the \$50,000 limit? Our producers have ground in other counties and our CPDS cooperators are not attached to the same producer in another county. Is this \$50,000 separate from Salmon Recovery Funds, NRI, Implementation and Fire recovery. This needs to be clear

Who is eligible to apply for VSP Supplemental Budget funds? Current VSP operating funds are disbursed through contracts with VSP counties. Conservation Districts have agreements with many counties to implement the VSP plans and serve as the technical services provider. Will these funds have to go through the County or can Conservation Districts also request funds if the workgroup approves the projects? Asotin County would require formal contract amendments each time a new project is funded. Both the amendment with WSCC and the amendment with the Conservation District would have to go the counties formal approval process. This will slow the process even more, making it nearly impossible to successfully implement project on an already tight timeline.

The guidance talks about Conservation districts having to meet on the CAPP requirements to be eligible to receive funds. Again, please be clear on who is eligible to request funds. Counties, conservation districts or both. If Counties request the funds, how will projects be entered into CPDS if they are not working directly with a conservation district?

We are excited that there were VSP funds included in the capital budget and want to see VSP fund more on-the-ground projects to meet the goals and benchmarks in the workplans. We need a clear, streamlined approach to ensure projects get completed in a tight timeline.

Response: Thank you for your comments. A portion of the comment goes beyond the scope of the guidelines and discusses how the Commission administers all of its grant and cost-share programs. These supplemental guidelines for VSP supplemental funding must meet current Commission programmatic grant and cost-share requirements. However, the changes proposed in the comment to the overarching structure of how the Commission administers its grant and cost-share programs can be brought to the Commission as part of its review of how it is structured.

As for the salmon-centric focus of the guidelines, please see the response to Comment #3, above. While we understand the timing difficulties inherent with projects associated with salmon habitat, we are informed by our contacts with the legislature that those salmon-centric projects should receive more attention than others. However, given the proposed amendment to Section 5 of the

guidelines however, we feel that an appropriate compromise has been reached after receiving similar comments.

As for the \$50,000 limit, the Commission must adhere to programmatic grant and cost-share procedures parameters as set out in the [Commission's Grant and Contract Procedures Manual](#) (please see the response to Comment #1, above). The Commission tracks the \$50,000 limit through CPDS. Also, as addressed earlier in this response, your comment about the \$50,000 limit implicates Commission policy across all of its grant and cost-share programs, which goes beyond the scope of these guidelines. However, as we stated earlier, the changes proposed in the comment to the overarching structure of how the Commission administers its grant and cost-share programs can be brought to the Commission as part of its review of how it is structured.

The \$3,000,000 available under these supplemental funding guidelines is for projects that meet the eligibility criteria, as set out in these guidelines. That means, it is available to willing landowners who want to install best management practices that meet the eligibility criteria. A county that uses as VSP technical service provider (TSP) to administer VSP typically has a contract in place already to meet that purpose which also allows for the TSP to handle cost-share projects. If a TSP's agreement with its county does not allow for the handling of the cost-share projects, the TSP should re-negotiate its contract with the county. The Commission believes that [the template it has provided](#) for TSP's to use with their county is adequate for this purpose, but TSP's and the county are free to use their own template or agreement.

Conservation districts are required to meet Commission CAPP requirements. A CD that is entering projects in CPDS must adhere to the Commission's grants, cost-share, and CPDS procedures. A county that is working without a CD to enter a project in CPDS for potential VSP supplemental budget funding must also meet the Commission's grant, cost-share, and CPDS procedures, but because the Commission does not have oversight of the county through the CAPP, the county does not have to meet CAPP requirements.

Comment Reference Number 6

Commenter: Whitman CD staff
Type: Formal comment through our online comment form, July 1, 2022
Comment: We understand that precision ag is currently not a NRCS practice (portions of precision ag are practices, but don't have 10 year life), we are interested in having Precision Ag from the WSCC that has a 10 year life span eligible for VSP funding.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The comment goes beyond the scope of the guidelines and discusses how the Commission administers all of its grant and cost-share programs. These supplemental guidelines for VSP supplemental funding must meet current Commission programmatic grant and cost-share requirements. However, the changes proposed in the comment to the overarching structure of how the Commission administers its grant and cost-share programs can be brought to the Commission as part of its review of how it is structured. Under current

Commission policy and procedure, precision agriculture is not an eligible practice for these reasons:

- Capital funding is for 10-year life span BMPs
- Equipment, tractors, GPS etc. would not be eligible under capital funding
- The Commission provides cost share on three types of practices: NRCS BMPs, SCC approved BMPs and practices designed by a licensed engineer

The [Commission's Grant and Contract Procedure Manual](#) states on page 32:

Capital Grant Programs

A capital project is a project to construct either new facilities or make significant, long-term renewal improvements to existing facilities. A capital project usually has the length of time of an NRCS BMP practice life and typically requires the involvement of an architect and/or engineer. Grants made by the state to fund capital projects for other entities are also included in the capital budget.

Capital projects are usually funded by sources specifically set aside for capital purposes, such as proceeds of bond sales, long-term financing contracts, and other dedicated revenues. Projects are typically on-the-ground projects and technical assistance activities limited to those that support projects or will lead to capital funded projects.

Comment Reference Number 7

Commenter: South Douglas CD Supervisor

Type: Formal comment through our online comment form, July 1, 2022

Comment: It is disappointing that projects are limited to a salmon focus. There are 5 points of critical areas protection in VSP. To limit funding to only one partial area sends a strong message that, although folks are supposed to protect and enhance other species, values, and functions, they can pretty much not count on state support to do so, in terms of VSP implementation dollars. It's not a very positive message as we try our best to encourage all types of agriculture to participate. Kind of hard to say, "sorry Farmer, but we can't use this funding to address sage grouse, or pygmy rabbits, or frequently flooded areas, or critical aquifer recharge areas, or wetlands, or agricultural viability." To me, that sends a clear message to program participants, or potential participants, that there is one, and only one priority for funding, and therefore for VSP project implementation. And that will lead to disengagement with VSP in many areas of the state.

I do not believe that the legislature intended such limit in scope on the use of these funds.

I would also urge you to review the types of fundable projects, and include planning, as well as allow phasing of projects to keep in line with cultural resources review and permitting requirements.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Please see the response to Comment #3, above. As for project type and phasing of projects, those aspects go beyond the scope of these guidelines and discusses how the Commission administers all of its grant and cost-share programs. These supplemental guidelines for VSP supplemental funding must meet current Commission programmatic grant and cost-share requirements. However, the changes proposed in the comment to the overarching structure of how the Commission administers its grant and cost-share programs can be brought to the Commission as part of its review of how it is structured.

Comment Reference Number 8

Commenter: Franklin CD Manager

Type: Formal comment through our online comment form, July 1, 2022

Comment: Item No. 2 on the "Required Funding Criteria" needs to be removed. VSP is not a salmon recovery program. It can assist in salmon recovery but there are 5 critical areas within VSP that must be addressed. The legislature did not limit or direct these additional funds to salmon recovery but rather to the VSP program. The additional funds should be able to be used for other critical areas such as shrub-steppe, groundwater quality, etc.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Please see the response to Comment #3, above.

Comment Reference Number 9

Commenter: Benton CD Manager

Type: Formal comment through our online comment form, July 1, 2022

Comment: Item No. 2 on the "Required Funding Criteria" needs to be removed. VSP is not a salmon recovery program. It can assist in salmon recovery but there are 5 critical areas within VSP that must be addressed. The legislature did not limit or direct these additional funds to salmon recovery but rather to the VSP program. The additional funds should be able to be used for other critical areas such as shrub-steppe, groundwater quality, etc.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Please see the response to Comment #3, above.

Comment Reference Number 10

Commenter: Thurston (WDFW) State agency staff

Type: Formal comment through our online comment form, July 1, 2022

Comment: July 1, 2022

Bill Eller
VSP Coordinator
Washington State Conservation Commission
300 Desmond Drive SE
Lacey, WA 98504

Dear Mr. Eller,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Supplemental Budget Programmatic Guidelines. WDFW values the partnership we have with the State Conservation Commission (SCC), our shared interest in salmon recovery, and our participation on the statewide Technical Panel. Salmon recovery is a priority for achieving WDFW's state mandate to preserve, protect, and perpetuate fish and wildlife and provide fishing and hunting opportunities. We appreciate the SCC's efforts to develop a strategic funding guidance that prioritizes salmon recovery in VSP-participating counties and watersheds.

Funding Criteria

WDFW supports the funding criteria outlined in the draft programmatic guidelines, which lists salmon habitat resource needs as a key criterion and encourages the clustering of projects where other recovery efforts are underway. We believe a targeted approach that seeks to restore and maintain habitat connectivity will help our state achieve long-term salmon recovery goals.

Relating to supplemental criteria C, which asks applicants to identify whether the project is identified as a priority by a Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group, state agency, or tribal government, we offer the following suggestion: because VSP encourages counties to incorporate local, regional, and watershed recovery plans into their work plan, we recommend the SCC broaden the scope of criteria C to include a wider range of recovery plans. We believe this will support a process that is inclusive of the priorities outlined in each county work plan.

Application Questions

WDFW supports the applicant questions listed in the draft programmatic guidelines, which requires VSP counties to identify which salmon-related functions and values will be impacted by a proposed project. We are encouraged by this approach, which lists functions and values identified by WDFW and other Technical Panel agencies in the SCC's recently adopted VSP Monitoring Guide. This is a great opportunity to create synergy between VSP goals and objectives and SCC programmatic guidance.

WDFW's Riparian Management Recommendations

WDFW developed Riparian Management Recommendations to protect and-where possible-restore healthy, intact, and fully functioning riparian ecosystems, which are fundamental for clean water, healthy salmon populations, and climate resilient watersheds (Rentz et al. 2020 or Volume 2). Restoring riparian areas is critical for recovering degraded salmon habitat, which we believe can be strongly supported by this funding if salmon habitat resource needs remain a key criterion. WDFW's Riparian Management Recommendations are available as a resource for prospective applicants, and WDFW staff are available to offer technical assistance implementing the recommendations.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft funding guidelines. WDFW regional habitat biologists have been informed of this funding source and will be available to provide technical assistance to VSP county work groups applying for this funding. WDFW looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the SCC on salmon recovery efforts and other conservation objectives in VSP.

Sincerely,

Tom O'Brien
Ecosystem Services Division Manager, Technical Panel Representative
Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

Sean Williams
VSP Coordinator
Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

References

Rentz, R., A. Windrope, K. Folkerts, and J. Azerrad. 2020. Riparian Ecosystems, Volume 2: Management Recommendations. Habitat Program, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Olympia, Washington.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Please see the response to Comment #3, above. Additionally, we believe the change we've made to the supplemental criteria broadens the scope of the criteria, allowing for a wider range of recovery plans to be considered.

VSP Supplemental Budget Programmatic Guidelines FY 2022-2023

1. Program Background:

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is an alternative to regulation under the Growth Management Act for counties to protect critical areas while maintaining agricultural viability. Each county must opt-in to VSP, establish a watershed work group, and create a county-wide watershed plan that sets protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks. Monitoring and adaptive management of the goals and benchmarks and work plan is used by the county work groups to ensure VSP success.

The following are general procedures for VSP supplemental capital funds appropriated by the legislature for the FY 22-23 biennium. These procedures may require change.

2. SSB 5651 Language

\$3,000,000 of the State Building Construction Account-State is added to the Voluntary Stewardship Program (92000016).

3. Program Rules:

- All proposed projects must be entered into the Conservation Commission (SCC) Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS) consistent with these guidelines.
 - The Contract for Cost Share must be printed from the CPDS for all cost-share projects. No changes may be made to SCC's Contract for Cost Share.
 - "Before" and "After" pictures are required for each practice.
 - "Planned" and "Actual" implementation measures are required for each practice.
- All projects must answer a specific set of VSP-related questions in the funding tab in CPDS. See questions below.
- Maximum cost-share per landowner per fiscal year is \$50,000 per 13-25 Category 3 Policy, May 16, 2013. Funding in excess of \$50,000 may be requested and will be considered for funding on a case-by-case basis.
- All best management practices (BMPs) must meet NRCS standards and specifications, alternative practice designs approved by a professional engineer licensed by the State of Washington or an SCC approved practice per 13-05 Cost Share Assistance Policy, March 21, 2013. A "BMP" or practice is defined as an approved practice per current NRCS BMP Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), or SCC approved practices, or Licensed Engineer approved practices.
- Since the source of these supplemental funds is the capital budget, eligible BMP's must have at least a 10 year design life.
- Cost share awards are allocated based on the information provided and the dollar amount requested in the CPDS. The funding request for cost share should take into account the applicable (district or county) cost share reimbursement rate.
- Based on the cost share award, an additional 25% will be awarded to include the costs of technical assistance, engineering, travel and overhead. This percentage of overhead is only allowed to be billed based on actual hours worked.
- Cultural resource costs are awarded on a case by case basis to cost share funding.

- Conservation districts must meet all of the Accountability requirements under the Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (CAPP) in order to be eligible to receive funds.
- Work must be underway on the awarded project within 120 days of the funding allocation. This could be technical assistance effort or actual construction.
- Any permits needed to complete project must be "in hand" before construction.
- All project and practices must be completed in the funding time frame. The funding is granted on a biennium basis (for example: July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023) therefore, all projects must be completed by the end of each biennium. All technical assistance costs must be vouchered for in the month following when the expenditures are incurred.
- Ineligible costs:
 - Administrative goods and services (office rent, copy machines, telephones etc....)
 - Education and outreach
 - Equipment, including vehicles
 - Technical assistance not associated with a project is not eligible
 - Projects on publicly-owned lands

4. Cost Share Policy:

- All cost share projects must be in compliance with the SCC policy adopted on March, 21, 2013, Cost Share Assistance Policy #13-05.
- The maximum cost share per land owner per fiscal year is \$50,000. Funding in excess of \$50,000 may be requested and will be considered for funding on a case-by-case basis.
- All practices must meet NRCS standards and specifications, or be designed and approved by a certified engineer.
- All projects must be completed by June 30, 2023.
- All projects must have approval, at an open public meeting, of the county work group prior to submittal. Applications submitted without county work group approval will be rejected.

5. Funding Criteria:

- Required criteria. Projects must:
 1. Be in a VSP watershed, and
 2. Be designed to meet a county VSP work plan goal or benchmark, and
 3. Seek to address salmon habitat resource needs/impacts. Projects that address salmon habitat resource needs/impacts are those projects that provide a demonstrable benefit to salmon habitat by addressing resource needs or impacts. Examples include projects that reduce stream temperature, increase shade, address instream habitat, riparian area exclusion fencing, and/or remove barriers to fish passage, and
- Supplemental criteria. Projects that address any of the following will take precedence:
 - A. Projects within a county-nominated priority watershed.
 - B. Projects clustered together (within the same HUC 12 as your other projects, or another entity's project) or near other projects or projects previously funded by VSP or another state or federal agency to address salmon habitat resource needs/impacts or similar natural resource concerns. This unique targeted approach of clustering projects allows for more effective and efficient use of capital funding targeting focused geographic areas for measurable resource improvement.
 - C. Projects that are identified pursuant to RCW 77.95.060 (Regional fisheries enhancement group), or by a lead entity, or by another state agency and/or tribe as a priority in the watershed.
 - D. Projects implemented in areas identified on the 303(d) listings for temperature.

- E. Projects with tribal partnership, participation, or funding.
- F. Projects that have ancillary benefits to other critical areas and not causing degradation to other critical areas.

6. Detailed Project Questions in CPDS

All projects must answer a specific set of VSP-related questions in the funding tab in CPDS. Incomplete answers will result in the rejection of the project. Unresponsive answers will result in fewer points being awarded to the project, and may result in the projecting not being funded. CPDS questions project proponents must answer include:

- Required criteria.
 1. Please identify, using the list of functions and values, which salmon habitat resource needs or impacts this project addresses? Projects that address salmon habitat resource needs/impacts are those projects that provide a demonstrable benefit to salmon habitat by addressing resource needs or impacts. Examples include projects that reduce stream temperature, increase shade, address instream habitat, riparian area exclusion fencing, and/or remove barriers to fish passage. Please provide as complete a description of all needs or impacts as possible. Check all functions and values that apply. The functions and values list from the VSP Monitoring Guide include:

Wetlands

Flood Storage

Wetlands may store flood waters during periods of high water runoff, acting as natural tubs that attenuate peak flood and surface water volumes. (WDFW)

Water Quality Improvement

Shoreline & Erosion Control

Natural Products (food/medicines)

Food/Habitat for Fish & Wildlife

Aquifer recharge

Frequently Flooded Areas

Flood Storage

Reduced Erosion/Sedimentation

Groundwater Recharge

Hydrologic Connectivity

Food/Habitat for Fish & Wildlife

Nutrient/Sediment Distribution

Floodwaters transport nutrients that are beneficial riparian communities and aquatic plant life. (WDFW)

Geologically Hazardous Areas

Erosion Prevention

Landslide Prevention

Food/Habitat for Fish & Wildlife

Frequently, geologically hazardous areas are too steep to farm or build - yet some of these areas contain important habitat. (WDFW)

Sediment Input in Streams/Rivers

Feeder bluffs are sources of natural erosion and are important contributors of fine sediment to waterways, improving in-stream habitat for many species. (WDFW)

Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

Water Quality Improvement

Drinking Water Provisioning

Hyporheic Input for Streams/Rivers

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

Food/Habitat for Fish & Wildlife

Migration Corridors (seasonal habitat use, population viability)

Vegetative Cover (type, composition, and spatial extent)

Breeding/Nesting Areas & Winter Range

Riparian Specific Functions (shade, temperature regulation, pollutant removal, wood recruitment, and organic matter input)

Shrub-steppe Specific Functions (food, cover, migration, winter range, breed/nesting areas)

Species Specific Functions (e.g., raptors reducing rodent populations on vineyards)

Sustains Native Species/Ecosystems/Biodiversity

Pollination of Wild/Cultivated Plants

Predation of Pest Insects by Native Species/Communities

Societal Food Provisioning (e.g., fisheries)

2. What county VSP work plan goals or benchmarks is the project designed to meet? Please list all. Please explain how the projects is designed to meet each goal or benchmark. Please provide as complete an explanation as possible.

3. I certify that the work group has given its approval, and an open public meeting, for this project, and that the meeting minutes will be retained for proof and provided to the Commission when requested.

■ Supplemental criteria.

1. Is the project within a county-nominated priority watershed?
2. Describe how the project clustered together (within the same HUC 12 as other projects, or another entity's project) or near other projects or projects previously funded to address salmon habitat resource needs/impacts or similar natural resource concerns?
3. Has the project been identified pursuant to RCW 77.95.060 (Regional fisheries enhancement group), or by a lead entity, or by another state agency and/or tribe as a priority in the watershed? Please identify the organization and/or tribe and the written report in which the project is identified. Please include in your answer the internet (URL) link to the report in which the project is listed.
4. Is the project within an area or areas identified on the 303(d) listings for temperature? If yes, which one (Ecology's Project Name) and is the TMDL "In Development" or "Approved"?
5. Does the project have tribal partnership, participation, or funding? If so, please describe in detail.
6. Does the project have ancillary benefits to other critical areas and will not cause degradation to other critical areas? If so, please describe, in detail, the ancillary benefits to other critical areas and include how the project will not cause degradation to other critical areas.

Why does the SCC need to such detailed answers?

Deleted: Please upload the file that contains documentation of the approval of this project by the county work group (meeting minutes). Upload the file to the Documents tab. Please provide the file name of the file uploaded to the Documents tab that contains the documentation of the approval.

Answer: The SCC will need to write a detailed, narrative report for the Legislature and other interested entities on how this funding was spent and what the benefit was to the critical areas and natural resources, with a focus on salmon habitat. The SCC will also need to explain how these funded projects measurably improve critical areas and natural resource needs overall, and partnerships with other entities to make significant measurable improvements to these resource concerns. We must report how the funding impacted the watershed, how salmon habitat was affected, the number of new BMPs installed, and what benefit they brought to addressing county VSP work plan goals and benchmarks.

7. Timeline & Application for Funding

VSP funds are awarded on a monthly basis by the SCC. Projects submitted to the committee by the close of business on the first of the month will be reviewed by the committee by the end of the same month. Funds will be awarded based on complete applications submitted to the committee, after the committee's decision. Applicants must use the form the SCC creates for this purpose to be eligible for funding. Applications will be reviewed by the SCC VSP staff and SCC financial staff for complete information and adherence to program guidelines before funds will be awarded.

Work on funded projects must be initiated within 120 days of funding award. At the end of 120 days if progress has not been demonstrated, the county or district may forfeit the funding allocation. If funds are returned to the SCC or additional funding otherwise becomes available, subsequent application rounds may be conducted.

Projects will be reviewed when the "ready for funding" status in CPDS has been selected, and all information is complete in CPDS.

8. County and Conservation District Responsibilities

- All projects must be entered into the CPDS.
- Input the cost share amount needed for the project. It's not necessary to input engineering, travel, or other costs.
- Cost share contracts must be printed from the CPDS.
- For project input instructions, please refer to the CPDS "Quick Reference Guide" at <http://scc.wa.gov/cpds-2/>
- "Before" pictures are required for each practice.
- "Planned" implementation measures are required for each practice.
- Accurate coordinates (longitude/latitude) are required. SCC develops a map for each conservation district and county showing completed and planned projects. This map is used to assist with making funding decisions.
- Each district or county is responsible for keeping project entries in CPDS up-to-date.
- The CPDS will have a VSP tab with unique VSP project questions that will need to be answered regarding the project.
- All projects must have approval, at an open public meeting, of the county work group prior to submittal. Applications submitted without county work group approval will be rejected.

9. State Conservation Commission Responsibilities

Projects will be reviewed and approved by a committee made up of SCC staff. The review committee exists:

- To ensure consistency with funding procedures and funding intent
- To request clarity or additional information on the nature of specific projects

- To provide for case by case consideration of projects that are unique cases
- To provide formal award of funds for projects

The review committee will meet as often as necessary to review projects. Projects submitted to the committee by the close of business on the first of the month will be reviewed by the committee by the end of the same month. It is recognized that from time to time, projects may need further review by the review committee or SCC leadership.

Upon approval of the project by the committee, districts and/or counties will be formally notified of the award.

****NOTE: Periodic reports of Conservation District Supervisors and Associate Supervisors receiving cost share funding will be given to the SCC Commissioners.*

Applications will be reviewed and scored using a point system. Points will be awarded on the answers to the required and supplemental criteria in the CPDS application on the following basis:

- 0 points: Answer not responsive
- 5 points: Answer partially responsive
- 10 points: Answer fully responsive

10. Cultural Resources

Cultural resources review (CR) is required by the Governor's Executive Order 05-05 and 21-02 for all projects using both state operating and capital funding provided by SCC. Please refer to the SCC Cultural Resource Policy located on the SCC website: <http://scc.wa.gov/cultural-resources/>. All projects must have a cultural review before a project can be started. A cultural resources review begins only after the final design is complete to expedite the process. Please plan ahead to ensure enough time is permitted prior to implementation, which could be 45 days or more. CR reviews shall be consistent with [SCC Cultural Resources policy](#) and GEO 21-02. Districts may use their established cultural resources processes and consultants provided it is consistent with [SCC Cultural Resources policy](#) and GEO 21-02.

The Cascadia Conservation District (CCD) has staff archaeologists available to assist with cultural resources for fire recovery projects. If utilizing CCD archaeologists, the county or district must have an inter-local agreement with the Cascadia CD. Terms of service would be arranged between CCD and the county / district.

If your county / district has not yet done so, we also highly recommend that each district adopt an Unanticipated Discovery Plan that will provide guidance should a cultural resource be discovered unexpectedly during project implementation. A template can be found here: [Unanticipated Discovery Plan Template-CD](#).

11. Vouchering Process

Monthly grant vouchers are required. Technical assistance must be vouchered for on a monthly basis whether or not any cost-share practices or construction of a district implemented project were completed in the given month. Once practices are completed, the following fields need to be updated in the CPDS prior to reimbursement:

- "After" pictures are required for each practice.
- "Actual" implementation measures are required for each practice.
- Completion date of practice is required.

Refer to the Grants and Procedures Manual for more detailed information about vouchering <http://scc.wa.gov/grant-and-contract-procedure-manual/>

TAB 2



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Chris Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Ron Shultz, WSCC Policy Director
Kate Delavan, WSCC OFP Program Manager
Paige DeChambeau, WSCC Interim Communication Director
Alicia McClendon, WSCC Administrative Assistant

SUBJECT: Update on the Work of the Food Policy Forum

Action Item
Informational Item

X

Summary:

The Food Policy Forum was established in the Conservation Commission statute in 2020. Commission staff co-convene the Forum with staff at WSDA. This information is an update on the current work of the Forum, including three work groups: 1. State Marketing; 2. Land Use; 3. Farm Bill.

Requested Action:

No action requested. Information only.

Staff Contacts:

Ron Shultz, SCC Policy Director
Kate Delavan, OFP Program Manager
Paige DeChambeau, SCC Interim Communication Director
Alicia McClendon, WSCC Administrative Assistant

rshultz@scc.wa.gov
kdelavan@scc.wa.gov
pdechambeau@scc.wa.gov
amccclendon@scc.wa.gov

Background and Discussion:

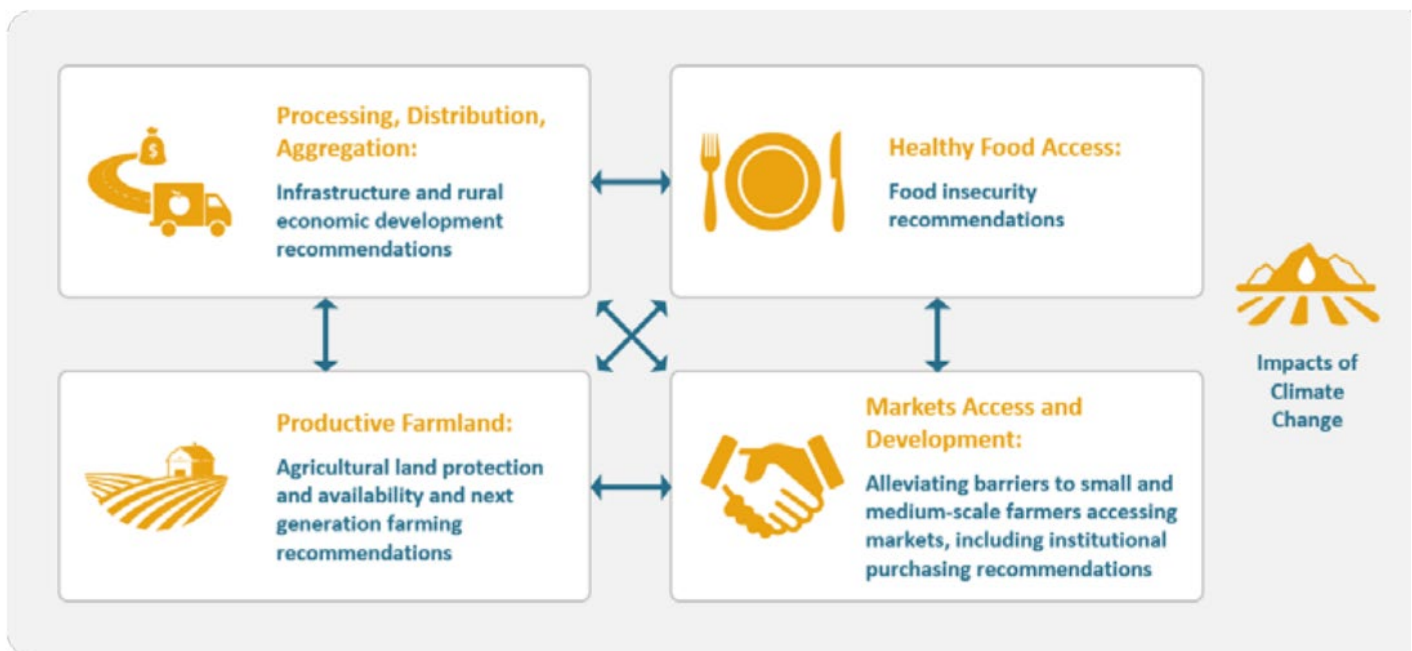
A budget proviso created the Food Policy Forum (Forum) in 2016. The proviso identified the SCC, WSDA, and the Office of Farmland Preservation as co-conveners of the Forum. In 2020, the Legislature passed a bill establishing the Food Policy Forum in SCC's statute.¹

As a body, the Forum has worked intentionally to build and maintain trust among members. This trust is necessary to avoid recreating the challenges experienced with the previous attempt to coordinate stakeholders on the food system issues, the Food System Roundtable. The Forum currently experiences quality engagement from diverse perspectives.

Figure 1 shows the Forum's systems approach and the intersecting food system areas up for discussion:

Figure 1: Systems Change Through the Forum's Five Recommendations Topics

There are many points of interconnection between the Forum's recommendation areas, and the Forum's recommendations are mutually supportive. The greatest and most effective progress will come from moving multiple food system recommendations forward in tandem so that systems change can occur.



Forum Coordination & Staff Roles

The SCC Executive Director and WSDA Director are responsible for appointing Forum members.

The Forum is co-coordinated by SCC and WSDA, with OFP. It is composed of representatives of food/hunger advocacy organizations, farmers markets, food distribution, commodity groups, ag groups, legislators, and CDs. The Forum developed recommendations in 2017 and is currently working on implementation proposals for those recommendations.

Currently, four SCC staff assist the Forum: Ron Shultz and Kate Delavan serve as co-leads assisting in strategy development and implementation; Paige DeChambeau provides communication support; Alicia McClendon provides administrative support; and Laura Raymond from the WSDA is the third co-lead.

¹ [Chapter 89.50 RCW](#), Washington Food Policy Forum

The consulting firm Ross Strategic provides contract facilitation services. Ross's participation as a neutral third-party facilitator has proven instrumental in the success of the Forum and in maintaining trust among members.

Forum Membership

The Forum is currently composed of 42 members representing a cross-sector of the food system. Sectors represented in the Forum include food/hunger advocacy organizations, farmers markets, food distribution, commodity groups, agricultural groups, conservation districts, county governments, state agencies, and elected officials.²

Forum Reports and Equity Filter

To date, the Forum has produced three reports to the Legislature. The [June 2019 Recommendations Report](#), the first report sent to the Legislature, includes over 50 recommendations for improving the food system.

In response to a request from the Washington State Governor's Office, the Forum worked from March to June 2020 to identify early implementation actions that tie to its 2019 recommendations and consider challenges and opportunities presented by the COVID-19 crisis and response. Those early implementation actions are captured in the Forum's second report: [2020 Early Implementation Action Report](#).

In its third report, [2021 Report to the Legislature](#), the Forum reflected on its prior consensus recommendations to produce a short list of recommendations that were particularly timely and relevant for action during the 2022 legislative session.

Following up on a commitment made in the Forum's 2020 Early Implementation Action Report, the Forum sought to develop a process to identify how Forum actions impact equitable outcomes for Washingtonians. The resulting [Equity Filter](#) was developed and tested throughout 2021. The intention of the filter is to help guide the Forum in its work to develop and take action the development of a food system that benefits all people in Washington. It is considered a living document in that the Forum intends to align its work on equity with guidance provided by Washington state agencies, such as the newly funded Office of Equity. The filter helped inform the presentation of the recommendations in the 2021 Report to the Legislature.

Forum Work Groups

A key focus of the work of the Forum in the months ahead is the development of work groups and tasks identified by those groups. Forum members identified work groups during a meeting where members identified the most pressing issues based on the recommendations in previous Forum reports. Based on this survey of members, the following three work groups were identified:

1. State Branding

Currently, Washington state does not have an official state brand/label/marketing program that would identify and promote products from Washington. Many years ago, there was a state brand and promotional effort at WSDA called "From the Heart of Washington." There are multiple promotional efforts underway independent from the state that aim to elevate consumer awareness of Washington's local products.

² The current membership roster is available [here](#).

What is the proposal under consideration?

- Washington State Brand Program
- 2019 Forum consensus recommendations:
 1. Increase purchases of Washington farm products with procurement policies and better visibility and promotion of Washington products in the marketplace.
 2. Create a Washington state brand program that makes local products – and specific producers/farms more visible and easy to code and track through existing supply chains.
- Program contains a marketing, education and outreach component
- Proposal includes awareness and consideration for already existing programs

WSDA is looking into creating a budget package that would continue to study the issue and the impacts it could have on participants and on programs already in place.

2. Land Use

Loss of productive farmland continues at an unacceptable rate in Washington state. Pressures on agricultural land from development are increasing in recent years with the high cost of rental and owned housing. Also, during the pandemic, many people adjusted to working from home which has led to an increase of workers moving into rural areas because they could now work remotely from anywhere. This shift has led to an increase in land prices and loss of farmland in more rural areas.

In the next two years, many counties will need to review and revise their local comprehensive plans and development regulations. This presents an opportunity to engage with counties to share with them data on farmland loss and discuss how land use planning can help in the protection of productive agricultural land.

This work group is developing a webinar for county elected officials, county staff, and others to share information on farmland loss and land use planning tools. The webinar will be on [August 4, 2022](#).

3. Farm Bill 2023

Many state agencies and stakeholders rely on funding and programs in the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill is broad-ranging legislation passed every five years by Congress. The bill funds a wide variety of programs, including nutrition programs and conservation programs at NRCS.

This work group is organizing a policy summit on the Farm Bill. The intention is to bring together state agencies and stakeholders to discuss elements of the Farm Bill that supports their work and recommend any possible changes. We will share this information with our state Congressional delegation as they consider the next iteration of the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill policy summit will be on October 12, 2022, from 1 - 4 p.m.

Next Steps:

As mentioned above, Commission staff will continue to coordinate with WSDA staff on the implementation of the Food Policy Forum. Commission staff will also support and engage in the work of the Forum's three work groups mentioned herein. Future briefings for the Commission will be made in the future.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Jon K. Culp, Water Resources Program Manager

SUBJECT: Stockwater Update

Action Item

☐

Informational Item

☒

Summary:

Staff have been working with the WACD Livestock Taskforce and other stakeholders on the Commissions directives from the December 2021 meeting.

- 1. The Commission offers to convene a stakeholder group to discuss how stock water could be provided in a manner consistent with state law, but still meet the needs of the landowner.*
 - In Progress
- 2. Examine existing instream flow rules to determine whether they include an exemption for stock water use.*
 - In Progress
- 3. Examine existing adjudicated watersheds to determine if they include a non-diversionary stock water reserve.*
 - List complete; analysis is in progress
- 4. Explore possible statutory changes for legislative consideration to allow for a de-minimus use for stock water.*
 - In Progress
- 5. Allow for a phased implementation of the new policy.*
 - Completed by Ecology

Staff Contact:

Jon Culp, WSCC Water Resources Program Manager
Ron Shultz, WSCC Policy Director

jculp@scc.wa.gov
rshultz@scc.wa.gov

Background and Discussion:

In 2021, Ecology proposed a change to POL-1025 to clarify that any such diversion of surface water for stock water purposes requires a water right or claim, and if no water right exists, one must be obtained by the landowner. This action created uncertainty about the legal use of surface water for existing and future livestock operations across the state. Because conservation districts have been working with stock producers to fence off surface water to improve water quality conditions, a path forward to establish legal certainty for both instream and out of stream users became important to many districts and their constituents.

We are working on multiple fronts to address concerns and identify a path or paths forward in order to help districts continue to enhance both water quality and water quantity goals at the local level.

1. Stakeholders

The following is a list of interested parties and stakeholders that we have either initiated a conversation with or planning a conversation with to gather input and perspective on the stockwater issue and its impacts.

Ashley House	WA Cattlemen's Assoc.
Dr. Jill Swannack	WA Sheep Producers
Josslin Schoesler	Cattle Producers of WA
Jack Field	WA Cattle Feeders Association?
Jay Gordon	WA Dairywomen's Federation
_____	WA State Farm Bureau
_____	Washington Environmental Council
_____	Center for Environmental Law and Policy
_____	American Rivers
_____	The Nature Conservancy
Peggen Frank	Salmon Defense
Cody Disautel	The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
Phil Rigdon	The Yakama Nation
Larry Wasserman	Swinomish Tribe
Kadi Bizyayeva	Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians (Mara Machulsky (Jocelyn Leroux?))
Chris Sterns	Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation

2. Instream Flow Rule Exemption

Ecology has been working on a list of WRIA rules that include an exemption for stockwater. Note that this exemption is to the rule, not water law. A right is still required, but the basin isn't closed to new stockwater rights as long as they pass the four-part test in RCW 90.03.290:

1. the water will be put to "beneficial use",
2. the water is available,
3. there is no impairment to existing water rights, and

4. it is not detrimental to the public interest.

Dave Christiansen is the ECY staff lead on this effort at present. He has regional water managers reviewing the language in the rules to create better understanding of this path. There is some trepidation around how the Hirst Decision might impact this option if it were to go to the courts.

3. Adjudications

Ecology has provided a list of basin and sub-basin adjudications with a reserve for non-diversionary stock water. These would provide a path forward for exclusionary fencing projects with off-stream watering.

Ecology is working on further fleshing out the variations in allowance and language in each adjudication as there is no standard language consistent in all of them. See Table on last page. Dave Christiansen is presently the ECY staff lead on this effort. He has regional water managers reviewing the language in the rules to create better understanding of this path.

4. Statutory Exploration

Staff have some ideas about how water law might be amended, conceptually, to provide protections for stockwater use and instream resources. At this time, we are awaiting stakeholder input to further develop our thoughts under this directive.

Next Steps:

- Finalize stakeholder communication list
- Develop a shared list of dynamic questions
- Set up communication with stakeholders
- Communicate with Dave Christiansen around ECY continuing work on the use of Instream Flow Rule exemptions and Adjudication Reserves for stockwater.
- Prepare to communicate with regional Water Resource Program Section Managers about the instream flow rules and adjudications within their region and how they view them.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Chris Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Alison Halpern, Scientific Policy Advisor

SUBJECT: Riparian Plant Propagation Program (RPPP)

Action Item

☐

Informational Item

☒

Summary:

The Governor's commitment to significantly ramp up salmon recovery efforts includes the goal of increasing riparian habitat. A need for locally sourced native trees and shrubs for these restoration projects was identified, and a new program called the Riparian Plant Propagation Program (RPPP) was created at the SCC. \$1.3M was appropriated for FY23 in the operating budget, along with continued funding at that level.

The proviso language attached to the funding calls for the SCC to "develop a riparian plant propagation program of native trees and shrubs to implement riparian restoration projects that meet riparian zone requirements established by the department of fish and wildlife. Plants will be made available for free or at a reduced cost to restoration projects."

We envision working with a collaborative partnership that will include interested wholesale and retail nurseries, DNR's nursery, and conservation districts (and the WACD Plants Materials Center) to come up with complementary approaches to increase production of riparian species without competing with the necessary resources to grow more trees for post-wildfire recovery. We will be hiring an RPPP coordinator this summer or early fall to communicate and harmonize efforts.

Requested Action:

None requested.

Staff Contact:

Alison Halpern, SCC Scientific Policy Advisor (ahalpern@scc.wa.gov, 360-280-5556)

Background and Discussion:

The Governor's commitment to significantly ramp up salmon recovery efforts includes the goal of increasing riparian habitat. Amid discussions about approaches to increase riparian habitat, concerns were expressed that existing inventory of and ongoing sources for native riparian trees and shrubs were insufficient for the increased demand. A new program was created at the SCC to coordinate efforts to procure regionally-sourced native trees and shrubs. Increasing stock of native trees and shrubs will take many partners and approaches, and we see three ongoing stages of this program: Propagation; Cultivation; Restoration.

Propagation: We envision working with wholesale and retail nurseries, the WACD Plant Materials Center, Districts, and others with the capacity to propagate native riparian tree and shrub species through seed collection/germination and vegetative cuttings. Logistics are still in development, but we will probably take the approach of ordering and purchasing native plugs, bare root, and 1-yr-old or younger potted plants from nurseries, WACD, and others. These young plants will be cultivated by Districts and their partners so that older (3-5 years) potted plants with greater viability can be used for restoration projects.

Cultivation: Many Districts have expressed interest in the program – and know of prospective partners who can help with cultivation. Funding from the RPPP could potentially be used for infrastructure at District properties, such as greenhouses, fencings, and cold-storage units. There is also exciting potential for Districts to engage their local communities through cultivation partnerships, such as through schools, gardening and stewardship groups, and even senior centers. Interested participants could care for potted plants and then return them to the District when they are grown out.

Restoration: The RPPP Coordinator will work to match the need for riparian trees and shrubs with regionally available stock.

Next Steps:

- Listening/brainstorming session with Districts; meeting with WACD Plant Materials Center; Continued communication with WSNLA
- RPPP Coordinator position announcement and recruitment
- RPPP funding opportunities made available to Districts
- Coordination with interested nurseries to pre-order stock each FY



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Chris Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Bill Eller, VSP Coordinator

SUBJECT: Update on the Voluntary Stewardship Program

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

Background Summary:

Staff provides an update on the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP).

Requested Action:

None. Informational item only.

VSP Update:

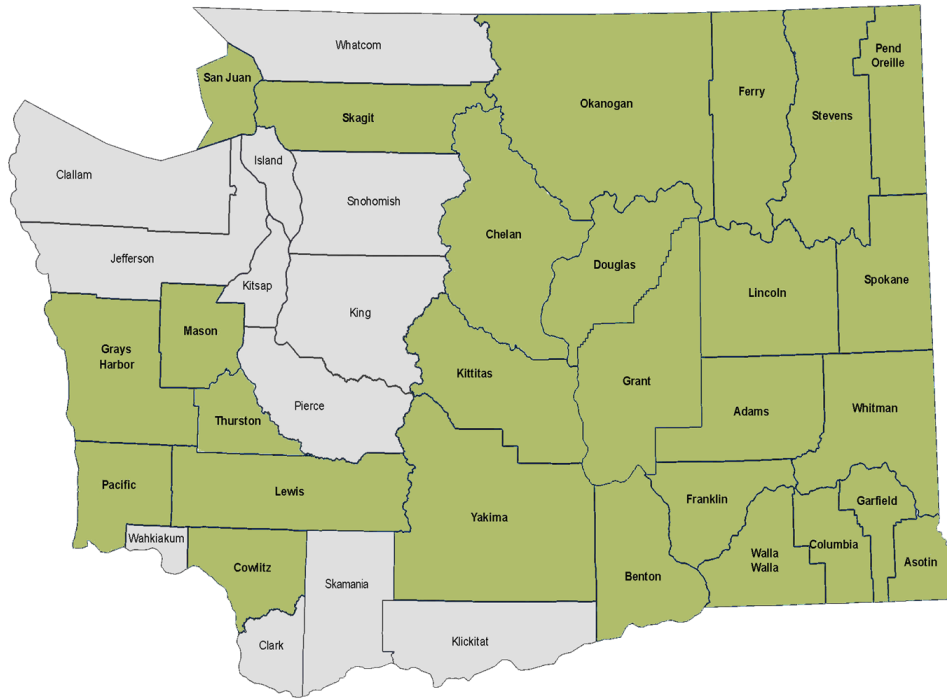
Commission staff continues to implement the VSP on behalf of the Commission. Two FTE's and portions of five other FTEs make up the VSP staff. Their recent efforts include:

- Creating supplemental funding guidelines for the first time in program history to address the \$3,000,000 in supplemental funding the legislature provided the Commission for VSP-related projects. A roll-out webinar was held on Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 9 am. Comments on the draft guidelines were received at that time, as well as through July 1, 2022. Those comments were incorporated into the final version of the guidelines presented today to the Commission for approval.
- Creating a sub-committee of SCC VSP staff to implement changes to the five year report template and database. Due to staff departure, the sub-committee's work on IT issues related to the proposed changes has been delayed, but we hope to sort out those issues soon to resume work.
- Planning our fourth quarterly VSP monitoring symposium for August / September 2022. Symposiums are designed to provide education and outreach on monitoring to VSP implementers who must monitor the functions and values of critical areas in their counties.
- Adopting the seventh policy advisory ([PA #07-22 Adaptive Management in the VSP](#)) to provide assistance to county work groups on how they adaptively manage their county-wide VSP work plan.

- Holding our sixth and seventh joint Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee VSP meetings. Each of these meetings includes an opportunity for up to three of the 27 VSP counties to meet with the Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee. This opportunity provides a place for dialogue to occur between the county and the Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee before the next five year report is due. So far, the following counties have taken advantage of this opportunity: Chelan, Thurston, Garfield, Kittitas, Benton, Mason, Cowlitz, Asotin, Adams, Grant, San Juan, Pacific, Okanogan, Skagit, Whitman, Columbia, Yakima, Douglas, Pend Oreille, Franklin, Walla Walla, and Stevens. Ferry, Grays Harbor, and Lincoln are set for August, and Lewis and Spokane are set for September's meeting.
- Presenting a VSP monitoring session at the Washington Association of Conservation District Employees (WADE) annual meeting on June 14, 2022.
- Setting a meeting in early August 2022 between VSP Technical Panel state agencies and NRCS, so that the VSP Technical Panel agencies will receive more training related to the science behind NRCS BMPs and how they are implemented and used in Washington State. NRCS BMPs serve as the basis for VSP project implementation at the county level, and are used as the standard for farm plan creation. VSP county-wide work plans rely on NRCS BMP implementation, and report on their progress in their 5-year report. The Technical Panel evaluates each county's 5-year report and needs to have a good understanding of how NRCS BMPs are implemented and used.
- Met with VSP Technical Panel state agency personnel, county work groups, and technical service providers for on-the-ground field sessions to discuss and review their monitoring activities. Counties assisted include: Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla. Staff are scheduled to visit Douglas, Okanogan, and Chelan counties in late July.
- Creating a draft report on the status of VSP implementation for OFM and the Legislature. After internal review, the report will be presented to the Commission and released to the public after their approval.
- Investigating establishing state-wide VSP branding signage that VSP counties can use when they implement VSP on-the-ground projects. Signs can be used by the VSP counties in the branding of those projects, and willing VSP-participating landowners will have signs installed on their project as part of project implementation.

Background:

All 27 VSP counties have approved Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) work plans (see map below).



All 27 counties are implementing their work plans. After approval of the plan, among other obligations, each county must meet a five-year reporting requirement. Each county's five-year report is due five years after they receive initial funding in VSP. That means each county has their own unique five-year report deadline.

Thurston and Chelan counties, as VSP pilot counties, submitted their five-year review and evaluation reports in July 2019. The Commission used those reports to further drive the development of the five year report process, Monitoring Guide, template and database. The other 25 VSP counties submitted their five-year review and evaluation reports from Nov. 2020 through May 2021.

Due to when the county VSP work plans were approved, most have only had between 12-18 months of VSP implementation since approval, rather than a full five years.

The five-year reports are reviewed and evaluated by the VSP Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee, and the Conservation Commission's Executive Director must concur (or not) with the county watershed work group's determination in the five-year report of whether the work plan's protection and enhancement goals and benchmarks have been met. There is no definition of "review and evaluate" in the VSP statute.

The Commission created a *Five Year Report Guide* which supplements the statutory process and defines key terms (like "review and evaluate") and adds other structures to the review and evaluation process (i.e. report content, how to submit the report, when to submit the report, how long the review will take, what will be reviewed, etc.). A five year report template and database

were created in order to solicit from each county the information needed by the Director to make their decision.

The next five-year reports for Thurston and Chelan counties are due in Jul. 2024, with the rest of the counties due in either 2025 or 2026.

Staff Contact:

Bill Eller, VSP Coordinator, 509-385-7512, beller@scc.wa.gov

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, 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
- **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**
- Building Better Series

Conservation District Service, Recent Topics

- **Supplemental Budget Funding & CD Webinar**
- COVID 19 Operations
- **FY-end & Grants Reporting**
- Hazard Mitigation Grant Wrap-up
- Donations & Surplus
- CD Property Ownership
- **CD Name Changes**
- RCPP
- **Annual & Long Range Planning Templates**
- **Purchasing, Bidding & Contracting**
- **EWPP**
- Mid-term Appointments
- **WSRRI Implementation**
- Leasing
- 23-25 Budget Requests
- Ethics
- **WADE Conference Participation**
- CD Staff Compensation
- Associate Supervisors
- **Engineering Grants**
- **Conservation Disaster Assistance Program**

Issues Resolution in Progress

- Personnel management: issues, turn-over, capacity gaps, transitions
- Inter-district relationships and partnering
- District governance
- Cash-flow

Supplemental Budget

Regional Managers have been working to: coordinate agreements for two pass-through appropriations to King Conservation District and the WA Resource Conservation & Development Council, provide input and feedback on draft program guidelines, provide recommendations for allocations of engineering funding, offer information on common barriers and challenges to implementing projects on the ground, direct questions to lead staff, and maintain two-way communication with conservation districts as developments occur. Shana Joy hosted a webinar, with the support and participation of SCC staff and leadership, for all conservation districts on July 1st. Two additional webinars are scheduled for July 28th and September 1st to continue coordination and discussions.

Partnerships & Partnering Assistance

The RM team provides ongoing assistance with partnering or participated in partner and relationship building efforts with: individual conservation districts, WADE, PSCD Caucus, 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.

Most work is wrapping under two inter-agency agreements with the Department of Natural Resources pertaining to DNR's post-fire programming and community wildfire resiliency work (CWR) for FY22. Three conservation districts (Asotin County, Okanogan, and Stevens County) that were impacted by fires in 2021 worked with Mike Baden to put together recommendations for DNR as they build out a post-fire program. Twelve conservation districts were able to take advantage of the short-term offer of funds from DNR for CWR work; grants awarded to those CDs totaled \$416,167. Additional funds for CWR in FY23 are under discussion with DNR staff. Work with the Forest Health Tracker will also continue into FY23. The intent is to continue discussing our partnership, mutual goals, and roles and responsibilities to inform an MOU/MOA between the two agencies as a foundation for our future cooperation. Shana Joy serves as our partner liaison to DNR and forest health/community wildfire resiliency subject matter lead at the SCC.

SCC participation and partnership with the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) in 2022 includes Shana Joy serving as Vice President of NASCA. Shana also serves on NASCA's policy and Farm Bill committees and represents NASCA as a Trustee on the Board of the National Conservation Foundation.

Western WA Flooding Response

Josh Giuntoli continues to coordinate with SCC, CD, and NRCS staff on eligible EWPP projects in Grays Harbor and Mason Counties. Additionally, Jean Fike has been problem solving, participating, and coordinating with Whatcom Conservation District to implement the new Agriculture Disaster Assistance funding in FY22 including working with other SCC staff on funding guidelines, timely review of applications for funding, and moving into FY23 with lessons learned to adaptively manage the program.

Wildfire Recovery

Mike Baden, Allisa Carlson, and Courtney Woods are administering the Fire Recovery grant program. Districts worked diligently prior to the end of the last fiscal year (FY) to complete funded fire recovery projects with landowners. For FY 23, the Commission is receiving the second half of the Fire Recovery funding that was appropriated for the biennium (\$1.5 million for each FY). Applications continue to be received from districts for fire recovery projects to be funded with FY23 funding of \$1.5 million. The Committee has made the first round of awards for projects where applications were submitted prior to the start of the new fiscal year. Project applications will continue to be received, reviewed, and funded on a regular basis as long as funding remains.

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. All work under this grant has been completed and work has started to close out the grant. In the end, all 10 planned trainings were completed with 257 individuals attending the various trainings. Home Ignition Zone site assessments that were included in the grant have also been completed by 16 districts. Our target was to complete 160 assessments and the final number of assessments completed was 199.

Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration & Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI)

Allisa Carlson and Shana Joy are participating on a steering committee with WDFW and DNR staff to implement a shrubsteppe habitat wildfire recovery and resiliency budget proviso that was appropriated to WDFW this biennium. A solicitation for eligible projects in the areas of deferred grazing, wildlife friendly fencing and habitat restoration was released on February 14th for the burn footprints of Whitney, Pearl Hill and Cold Springs Fires that occurred in 2020. Awards for FY22 were distributed to the Foster Creek, Lincoln County, and Okanogan CDs; funding 7 wildlife friendly fence, 4 virtual fence, and 10 deferred grazing projects. Habitat restoration projects are being implemented by WDFW with some district assistance. The FY22 deferred grazing projects were completed on June 30, 2022; and a total of 35,432 acres of shrubsteppe habitat were rested with support through WSRRI. One wildlife friendly fence project has been completed, and the remainder are ongoing.

The long-term strategy advisory group (LTSAG) has developed goals for the long-term strategy, and is taking a break in their monthly schedule so that the Wildlife Habitat and Wildland Fire workgroups can focus on developing objectives. The LTSAG is led by professional facilitators throughout the current biennium, and the long term strategy will be finalized by June 2023. The Foster Creek, Lincoln County, Benton, Franklin, North Yakima, and Okanogan CDs have engaged in the LTSAG.

More information can be found online at: [Shrubsteppe Fire Preparedness, Response and Restoration](#).

Chehalis Basin

Josh Giuntoli, SW RM, represents the Executive Director of the Commission as ex-officio member of the Chehalis Basin Board (CBB).

In addition to regular board meetings, the Chehalis Basin Board had a special meeting to brief board members on climate change methodologies and results that have informed decision-making to date. It was also a chance for the board to discuss the most recent climate change methodologies and results for high and low flows. If interested in reviewing material from that meeting, you can find them here under the June 27 meeting.

[Chehalis Basin Board](#)

The local conservation districts continue to be actively engaged in project development, project support and implementation. Josh is working with two districts on Emergency Watershed Protection projects in the Chehalis Basin as a result of flooding that occurred in January 2022. Lewis Conservation District was recently awarded up to \$150,000 to construct a previously identified erosion management project along SR 508 in Lewis County. In addition, Josh had the opportunity to join other board members on a tour with Grays Harbor CD to highlight a project they helped coordinate on the East Fork Satsop to protect existing high-quality habitats and restore in-channel structure and key habitats for aquatic species, such as deep pools and side channels.

The districts continue leading local Regional Implementation Teams to identify habitat projects brought forward by partners for Aquatic Species Restoration Program (ASRP) funding consideration. The portfolio of projects is growing and this spring, over \$10.5 million in funding was awarded to 6 projects, with one of those sponsored by Thurston CD for \$7.6 million. This effort is a 2.5 mile reach scale project on the main stem

Skookumchuck River working with 2+ agricultural landowners to enact various restoration treatments on main stem and tributary channels.

COVID 19

The Regional Manager team continues to monitor and review new information and guidance, and share it out to conservation districts as it is released from the Governor's Office, CDC, and other sources.

South Yakima Conservation District and GWMA Update

At the May 19th Commission Meeting, the Commission received public comment from Ms. Jean Mendoza pertaining to the South Yakima Conservation District (SYCD) and the [Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Management Area \(GWMA\)](#). The GWMA was formed and is led by the Department of Ecology working with numerous local partners. As the Southcentral Regional Manager, Allisa Carlson has been in touch with the South Yakima Conservation District regarding their work and the GWMA. SYCD continues to participate in the GWMA, working collaboratively with the Implementation Group on projects that enhance and protect groundwater in the Lower Yakima Valley. SYCD maintains this work as a high priority in their annual and long range plans and continues to seek additional funding and resources to support their work.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, Executive Director

FROM: Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: 2022 Conservation Accountability and Performance Program Final Report

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

Summary:

Commissioners, at the January 2022 meeting, approved the Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (CAPP) system with eight Standards including Accountability Standard 1 with requirements for use in 2022. The 15 Accountability Requirements (Standard 1) are based in law (RCW) and administrative code (WAC) for conservation districts. Completing or meeting 100% of these items is a threshold for receiving state funding through the Conservation Commission. An initial report was provided at the May 19th Commission meeting. The attached final annual status report is submitted to Commissioners for their information at this time. No action is requested.

Staff Contact:

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

Background and Discussion:

Conservation Accountability and Performance Program Initial Conservation District Statuses:

Forty-five conservation districts are currently meeting the Accountability Standard 1 elements. 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. Five conservation districts are currently working on updating their long range plans: Kitsap, Pend Oreille, South Yakima, Underwood, and Whatcom. It is anticipated that these will be completed during calendar year 2022, before the current plans expire. Benton, Okanogan, and Whidbey Island CDs have finished updating their long range plans.

Item 3. **100%** of conservation districts submitted annual plans of work on time to the SCC.

Item 6. Pierce Conservation District is actively working to conduct a new election. A new election date has been set for August 10th.

Item 8. The Whitman Conservation District is undergoing an accountability audit as well as an investigation for potential fraud. This situation is closely monitored and once the audit and investigation reports are available, the Regional Manager will be working with this district on an action plan to address any identified issues. Some immediate steps have already been taken by the district to address issues as they came to light.

Item 11. **100%** of conservation districts filed timely annual financial reports to the State Auditor's Office.

Next Steps (if informational item):

Any urgent issues throughout the year that may trigger potential action by Commissioners will be reported at the next regular 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:



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Chris Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Bill Eller, Election Officer

SUBJECT: Pierce Conservation District Election

Action Item

☐

Informational Item

☒

Background Summary:

Pierce Conservation District's (PCD) election was set for March 23, 2022. An error occurred related to the publication of a candidate's biography and statement. As a result, the Conservation Commission (Commission) declined to certify the PCD election on March 17, 2022. PCD went to Pierce County Superior Court and was directed to hold another election.

Requested Action:

None. Informational item only.

Pierce Conservation District Election:

The PCD election is set for August 10, 2022. Detailed are attached on the next page. Commission staff anticipate that the PCD election will be complete and a recommendation on certification able to be made in time for the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting on September 15, 2022.

Staff Contact:

Bill Eller, beller@scc.wa.gov, 509-385-7512



WSSC Center for Technical Development (CTD) July 2022 Commission Meeting

CTD Work Accomplishments

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

Explore more @ www.wactd.org

FY22 Overview: The FY22 year saw a number of changes for the CTD. We said goodbye to our longtime CTD Chair, Nichole Embertson, successfully transitioning to a Co-Chair approach with two longtime Leadership Team members; secured additional funding for the Training Coordinator position, allowing us to expand our training reach; and added to our Leadership Team and support team rosters, expanding our outreach and mentoring capacities. Throughout these changes, we continued to provide a host of virtual resources and training opportunities for District staff, expanding our networking forums, building out a Training Library of recorded training resources, and finalizing an overarching Engagement Strategy to guide communications as we move forward. We coordinated two, week-long virtual training events with NRCS; Nutrient Management Planning (NMP) and Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning (CNMP). These events, fully hosted and moderated by CTD with NRCS instructors, highlighted the value and success of virtual events in accommodating travel, time, and learning, as well as strengthened our training partnership with NRCS. We again coordinated closely with the WADE board to help bring the WADE conference to staff at both an in-person event and virtually. We launched a new Mentoring Program, hosting an Effective Mentoring training webinar, and we continue to build out resources for mentors and proteges on the CTD website. Additionally, we were able to provide more than \$7000 in training scholarships for both in-person and virtual trainings, to support district staff in training opportunities they may not have otherwise been able to attend. Lastly, we continued to provide direct professional support to Districts across the State with our database, ask an expert, mentorship, and planner resource information. Plus so much more!

Thank you for your continued input and support in shaping our direction - we look forward to continuing to grow this important work in the coming year!

Certification

CTD Planner Certifications: The CTD Planner Certification Program accepts applications on a rolling basis through an online submission process. **In FY23, the CTD will focus on building internal capacity around certification and continue to target outreach efforts to increase participation in the certification program.** The CTD is developing a strategic plan including outreach efforts such as newsletter articles, informational webinars, and direct outreach to district managers to help identify and overcome barriers to completing certification.

The CTD is taking the first steps toward development on a Forest Planner Certification this year. The Forest Planner Certification will join Farm Planner, Dairy Planner, and Riparian Planner Certifications. The CTD will again rely on a diverse mix of conservation district and partner professionals from across the state to help develop the certification requirements.

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 continuing fluctuation in virtual and in-person work environments, the CTD continues to curate and share virtual support tools and training opportunities on our webpage and via GovDelivery. Over the past two years, CTD has continually updated our planner resources on the CTD webpage, providing links to new opportunities and content for more effective remote working. **The CTD Training Library helps district staff easily locate past webinars and training opportunities by topic.** The Library is continually updated with new content.

Connecting Community: The CTD continues to build and host multiple Networking Forums for different planning disciplines and expertise. These Networking Forums have garnered good participation and interest from staff members. Currently the **CTD hosts seven Networking Forums: Cover Crop, Farm, Dairy, Riparian, Forestry, Plant Sale and Smartsheet.** These Forums are held quarterly and provide a much-needed space for planners and technical staff to share successes and challenges, ask questions, and connect year-round. An email listserv function and a shared Google drive complement the forums and provide additional space for connection and sharing.

The “Building Better: Leadership and Management Learning Community” series hosted by the CTD in collaboration with WSCC, WADE, and WACD targets existing and developing District managers/leaders of all levels. **This learning and sharing network is on a summer hiatus and will recommence in September with a meetings every other month.** A full series agenda, as well as suggested learning resources and materials from individual sessions, can be found on the CTD website.

CTD continues to actively solicit ideas for new Forums and Forum feedback and ideas for discussion are always encouraged, via embedded forms on the CTD website and through direct communication with Forum hosts. All Networking Forum information is available on the CTD website and promoted regularly through the monthly newsletter and special email announcements. An embedded events calendar lets staff quickly find training and networking events, and calendar links are available for all forums.

NRCS Planner Designations: The **CTD works closely with NRCS to help District staff through the NRCS Planner Designation process**, updating CTD materials to reflect changes, communicating to District staff through webinars and email announcements, and providing individualized assistance as needed. The CTD Training Plan Template and related materials are updated as changes occur. CTD’s coordination with NRCS is also 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.

Training

NRCS Collaboration: **Collaboration with NRCS training partners remains a top priority of the CTD.** The CTD Training Coordinator position significantly increases the CTD’s reach and impact to help District staff

through training, certification, and support processes. The Training Coordinator works in close communication with NRCS on coordination of individual training events to ensure better organization and placement of CD staff in NRCS trainings. Although NRCS approved and supported a 5-year cooperative agreement to share the cost of this highly needed position, funding has not yet been allocated by NRCS. **An NACD grant is currently providing additional support for the Training Coordinator while long-term funds are pursued.**

National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP): The **CTD participates in regular (bi-monthly) web-meetings of the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP)** 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 Training Coordinator participated in a sub-committee to provide specific recommendations on how to improve access to training for all potential conservation planners. The CTD also participated with NRCS Washington and other state partners to work on the Washington State Conservation Action Plan to improve training, certification, and communications. The Training Coordinator attended the national NCP work session in Minneapolis in May 2022, helping to represent WA state and our efforts in District staff training. The work session was also an opportunity to share and learn from other states' efforts in implementing training programs.

Training Needs Inventory (TNI): The CTD releases its annual TNI in close coordination with NRCS in early summer each year, with the goal of 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. Additionally, the CTD participates in the NRCS EDC meetings to voice support for highly requested trainings. **The CTD is currently coordinating with NRCS on the release of the FY23 TNI.**

NRCS Training Events: The FY22 NRCS State Training Bulletin was released in late fall of 2021 and the CTD is actively coordinating District staff into trainings, prioritizing requests from the TNI survey.

Covid-19 continues to play a role in the delivery of training events. The CTD keeps in regular contact with NRCS and posts new information regarding training opportunities on the CTD website. The CTD continues to advocate with NRCS to consider/create more web-based training events into the future. Over the two years, the CTD successfully partnered with NRCS to hold several key in-person courses in a hybrid format (virtual classroom followed by regional, small-group field days) and strongly advocates for this model as new courses are planned.

Core upcoming courses include:

- **Conservation Planning, Part 2**, which is a critical training for all planners, is identified in the FY22 NRCS State Training Bulletin and is currently in development, scheduled for Fall 2022 in a hybrid format.
- **Working Effectively With American Indians**, in development for early Fall 2022, as an in-person training.

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 SCC staff to provide **Contracting and Procurement Training** for district staff in FY23. Also in development are **VSP Monitoring** training opportunities.

The **CTD successfully collaborated with WADE again this year to provide technical track content and assistance in track coordination for the 2022 WADE Conference.** The conference was held in person, with a virtual streaming option for those who preferred to attend remotely. The CTD and WADE have sent out a post-conference survey for feedback from participants and will continue to coordinate moving forward.

The CTD **curates and host training and sharing webinars** focused on timely topics. Although not a regular monthly series currently, the CTD remains responsive to requests and holds space each month to share information as needed. The webinars are advertised on the CTD website, newsletter, and through special email announcements. The CTD co-hosts additional outside virtual training opportunities through NRCS and other partners, as appropriate. The CTD is always soliciting input and ideas for both webinars and trainings through its newsletter and website.

With the increase in virtual presentations including webinars, training events, and meetings, the CTD continues to curate and provide content to support virtual presenters. The CTD promotes the virtual resources available and offers additional support for planning, creating, and hosting virtual events. **A “Train the Trainer” course is in development for FY23 to further support the deliver of engaging trainings.**

All the recorded webinars and trainings hosted by the CTD are housed on the CTD website in the **CTD Training Library**. The Library is sorted by topic and includes a brief description, the recorded session, and links to any accompanying training materials. Additional content is added to the Library frequently.

Training Scholarships: Training scholarships remain a priority for the CTD. **CTD was able to award 20 scholarships in FY22** to a variety of planning, managerial, and education/outreach staff from across the state. These scholarships help support district staff time and registration fees to attend professional development opportunities that they may not have otherwise been able to attend.

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 recently completed updates to the website, improving aesthetics, clarity, and navigation of the site,** in accordance with our new Program Engagement Strategy.

Outreach: CTD has created a **Program Engagement Strategy** to increase recognition and impact for CD staff as well as better engage both internal and external partners. Our goal is to increase awareness of the CTD as a central provision of training and expertise and increase the collaboration with partners on events and resources. The Strategy will enable strategic communications and engagement with partners and others. In FY23, focus will be on collaboration with WSCC Communication staff to help implement the Strategy.

Newsletter: The CTD monthly GovDelivery newsletter continues to gain new subscribers (currently we have **more than 500 subscribers**). 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. The newsletter recently went through a format change, helping to create more consistent and streamlined content. Archived newsletters are now available on the CTD website.

Special Projects: The **CTD is working with the VSP group to provide training support** and review of technical documents upon request. The goal is to provide quality assurance, technical support, and better connect VSP staff to CTD certification programs.

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: The CTD supports work around the State on Discovery Farms 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

The CTD still holds value of development of a statewide Quality Assurance program for individuals and Districts. While the CTD can offer quality assurance assessments and planning product review upon request, we do not have a dedicated program developer for this area of work at this time.

CTD Coordination

Database: The database (run under Caspio) provides assistance in locating staff expertise for engagement in workgroups and captures metrics on expertise and certifications. **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 is currently working on updates to the Database to allow

for better tracking of progress towards planner certifications and to ensure that those pursuing certification are contacted for the appropriate training opportunities.

Budget: Underwood CD administers 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 has completed its annual (FY23) plan of work including metrics of success and short-term tasks and deliverables and submitted a FY23 budget request. **The FY23 budget and plan of work are available upon request.**

Leadership: The CTD Leadership Team 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 budget request was shared along with the proposed FY23 Annual Plan of Work.

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

The CTD will place an emphasis on **recruiting new members to both its leadership and working teams in FY23**. Several new task leads have recently joined the team to assist with training and event moderation, the development of the Mentoring Program, and assistance with the monthly CTD newsletter. New members represent both east- and west-side Districts, and the CTD continues to actively pursue representation from both sides of the state, and from both small and large districts.

CTD Contact Information

For more information on the CTD activities, please contact:

Jan Thomas, CTD Co-Chair / Training Coordinator | info@wactd.org

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



May/June 2022

Now that 'June-uary' is coming to a close and summer has returned to Washington, I hope that you'll take advantage of the numerous opportunities to get outside and enjoy all that our state has to offer. Take a look at the ['Weekender'](#) for a great summary of activities currently underway.

When you explore all the fish and wildlife opportunities that can be pursued, one doesn't have to look far to realize the importance of habitat in supporting biodiversity. To have sustainable, abundant populations, each species needs a combination of environmental factors including clean water, abundant food, shelter, and space. Further, these factors need to be arranged on the landscape so that animals can utilize those resources without unnecessary loss of energy or risk from exposure to a variety of mortality sources (predation, vehicles, etc.).

Washington is the smallest Western state with the second highest human population. With nine terrestrial ecoregions, the incredible biodiversity we enjoy here in the Evergreen State is supported by ample habitat which cannot be taken for granted.

I'll bet when you close your eyes and think about habitat in Washington, images that likely come to mind are state-managed wildlife areas and recreation lands, national parks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuges, national forests, or tribal reservations. However, in Washington, private land comprises about 50 percent of our land base. While other Western states' wildlife might be largely supported by large tracts of public land, here in Washington, the contribution by private landowners to conservation is critical.

Large private industrial timberlands often are in a mosaic of federal and state lands that provide key ingredients to support species including deer, elk, fishers, and songbirds. Agricultural lands enrolled in federal Farm Bill programs are critical for sage grouse, burrowing owls, and mule deer winter range. Small forest landowners provide critical green space corridors and riparian habitat for everything from amphibians to bobcats. Collectively, the preservation of open space and private landowners' commitments to coexisting with wildlife and fish is critical to support the outdoor lifestyle we enjoy.

And let's not overlook what can be done in our own backyards. It doesn't matter if you live in the downtown of a city or in a suburban development, you can grow habitat that benefits wildlife. Replacing thirsty lawns with native vegetation, installing bat boxes, and establishing pollinator gardens are great choices that we can make to support native animals and enrich our lives by providing watchable wildlife opportunities out the kitchen window. For more information, check out our "Habitat at Home" program [here](#).

Enjoy reading the rest of the Bulletin and I hope you have a great summer enjoying Washington's fish and wildlife—and the habitat that supports it.

Sincerely,



Kelly Susewind, Director

Topics in this message include:

- [Fish and Wildlife Commission recognizes community partners](#)
- [Boaters reminded to Be Whale Wise to protect vulnerable Southern Resident orcas](#)
- [Summer salmon fishing preview, exceptional spring Chinook and shad season on the Columbia River](#)
- [New Pollinator Garden unveiled at Washington State Capitol](#)
- [Avian influenza: common questions and answers regarding transmission to mammals](#)
- [WDFW updates age for fully virtual hunter education](#)
- [Emergency measures deployed to control invasive European green crabs](#)
- [Asian & Pacific Islander American Heritage Month spotlight](#)
- [Learning from the Landscape with STEAM students at Sagebrush Flats](#)
- [Memorable razor clam digging season and tips for gathering shellfish](#)

Fish and Wildlife Commission recognizes community partners



The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission recently recognized volunteers who donate their time and resources to help further conservation efforts. Award recipients include Volunteer of the Year Pete Haase of Skagit Marine Resource Committee, Organization of the Year Washington Sea Grant's Crab Team, Educator of the Year Megan Friesen, Ph.D. of St. Martin's University in Lacey, and Landowner of the Year Don and Janet Howard of Columbia County in southeast Washington. More information on each of these dedicated

volunteers is available [in our news release](#). WDFW enlists volunteers to help with habitat projects, provide hunter education, and assist with species monitoring. People interested in volunteering with WDFW can register and explore volunteer opportunities on WDFW's [Volunteer Opportunities webpage](#).

Boaters reminded to Be Whale Wise to protect vulnerable Southern Resident orcas



With boating season kicking off and new scientific reports identifying several Southern Resident Killer Whales in poor condition, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has [issued an emergency order](#) requiring commercial whale-watching vessels to keep at least one-half nautical mile away from endangered Southern Resident orcas this summer, and all boaters are urged to Be Whale Wise and do the same. The effects of vessel noise are especially prominent for

female orcas, which often cease foraging when boats approach within 400 yards. More information is also available [in this blog post](#). For more details about steps recreational boaters can take to keep the whales—and themselves—safe, visit BeWhaleWise.org.

Summer salmon fishing preview, exceptional spring Chinook and shad season on the Columbia River



Summer salmon fishing got off to a hot start in Puget Sound and on the Washington Coast from Neah Bay to Ilwaco. For a rundown on salmon fishing opportunities—including where and when to go, and what to catch—[check out this recent WDFW blog post](#). WDFW also recently released a [new blog post](#) and [short video](#) with tips to safely and responsibly release salmon that will not be retained so that they have the best chance for survival. WDFW is also [celebrating a partnership](#) with the Tengu Fishing Club of Seattle on a new research paper examining trends in the size of

resident Chinook salmon in Puget Sound. On the lower Columbia River, fishery managers [added additional fishing days](#) in June due to Chinook returns coming in above expectations. Shad fishing has also been excellent, with more than 4.2 million fish returning to the Columbia. Shad fishing tips and gear suggestions are available in [this June blog post](#).

New Pollinator Garden unveiled at Washington State Capitol



A new pollinator garden to support thriving butterflies, bees and birds was unveiled this month at the Washington State Capitol Campus in Olympia. The garden was created in partnership between the Office of Governor Jay Inslee, Washington Department of Enterprise Services, WDFW, Washington Department of Agriculture, Woodland Park Zoo, and the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. The garden features pollinator-attracting plants to provide food, water and shelter to pollinators, and has signage that informs visitors about the critical role of pollinators and how to attract

and protect them. The garden will provide a peaceful and quiet spot for legislators, state employees, and visitors at the otherwise bustling Capitol Campus. Learn more in [this June news release](#). In recent years, scientists have documented a decline in pollinators due to habitat loss, invasive species, pesticides, and climate change. Tips to “bee a friend” to pollinators are [also available in this WDFW blog post](#).

Avian influenza: common questions and answers regarding transmission to mammals



A racoon kit (baby) found at a park in Franklin County tested positive for the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus H5N1 2.3.4.4 strain. It was one of four kits found; two were dead and two euthanized due to showing obvious signs of being sick. A gull from the same park also tested positive for HPAI. While this development may be concerning to some as it signals a spread of the HPAI virus from birds to mammals in our state, it is not completely unexpected and not something to panic

about. WDFW staff prepared [a blog post with information on HPAI](#), transmission to mammals, and what can be done to prevent the spread. If you observe sick or dead birds, or other wildlife, please report it using WDFW's [online reporting tool](#). If sick or dead poultry are observed, please [report to the Washington Department of Agriculture](#).

WDFW updates age for fully virtual hunter education



With the school year ending and summer vacations nearing, WDFW urges prospective hunters to complete [hunter education](#) now to make sure they can participate in fall hunting opportunities. In response to COVID-19 and associated public health measures, WDFW implemented an all-online course during the past two years. On June 1, WDFW [increased the minimum age to take that course](#) from 9 to eighteen. Students under eighteen can complete the online course, but they must attend a field skills evaluation before they can become

certified. Traditional classroom courses are also available. There is no minimum age to take a course with an instructor-led component. Hunters can find hunter education course information and valuable short video resources to reinforce safety practices for new hunters on [WDFW's webpage](#). Experienced hunters who have never taken a hunter education class may also find them valuable.

Emergency measures deployed to control invasive European green crabs



As summer beings, deployment of emergency measures to control invasive European green crabs on the Washington Coast and at sites within the Salish Sea [is well underway](#), including the implementation of an Incident Command System (ICS) to facilitate statewide coordination between various agencies, tribes, and partners. WDFW has been working with tribes, other agencies, as well as shellfish growers and private tidelands owners to establish a coordinated response, hire and deploy personnel, and purchase and

distribute equipment to areas with known green crab infestations. Three boats, nearly a dozen new employees, and more than 700 specialized traps have been deployed, with more on the way. More than 64,000 European green crabs have been removed from Washington waters in 2022 as of June 11. Crab identification guides and an online reporting form are available at wdfw.wa.gov/greencrab. More detailed information and regular updates are also posted [on this webpage](#).

Asian & Pacific Islander American Heritage Month spotlight



At the WDFW we believe that science and conservation are best advanced by the leadership and contributions of people with widely diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities, who reflect the communities they serve. In celebration of Asian & Pacific Islander American Heritage Month [we interviewed Mark Yuasa](#), one of our communications managers, about how his Japanese heritage influences his connection to the outdoors and dedication to his community. Mark is an avid outdoorsman and was the fishing and hunting writer for 25

years at the Seattle Times, which took him on hundreds of outdoor excursions across the Pacific Northwest to write more than 7,000 stories or blog posts over his 33+ year career. Mark lives in the greater Seattle area with his wife who is a first-generation Chinese American and their two sons.

Learning from the Landscape with STEAM students at Sagebrush Flats



This spring, students from Waterville and Bridgeport elementary schools in north-central Washington explored science, engineering, math, and art on the Bridgeport Unit of Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area with our biologists and local farmers as part of the North Central Educational Service District's STEAM in the Field collaborative with the Methow Beaver Project, Douglas County Public Utility District (PUD), Foster Creek Conservation District and WDFW. Taught by

subject-matter experts, this program is unique in that it focuses student learning on solving complex, real-world natural resources issues. This type of outdoor, experiential learning can provide students with the skills and experiences to solve today's, and tomorrow's complex challenges. Read more about this inspiring collaboration in our [May blog post: Learning from the Landscape](#).

Memorable razor clam digging season and tips for gathering shellfish



The coastal razor clam season wrapped up on May 7, and the future looks bright with one of the strongest clam populations seen in the past 25 years. Clam diggers took nearly half-a-million trips during 120 calendar days of digging in the 2021–2022 season. Read more [in our blog post](#). “Thanks to healthy ocean conditions providing very abundant populations of razor clams, the 2021–22 season was one for the record books with nearly 8.4 million clams harvested taken in 484,324 diggers trips,” said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. To learn more about razor clam

abundance, population densities at various beaches, and how seasons are set, visit the [WDFW razor clam webpage](#). In other clamming news, WDFW staff recently highlighted shellfish gathering opportunities around the state in a four-part blog series, covering [clam digging basics and licenses](#), [butter and horse clams](#), where to go for [cockles and eastern softshell clams](#), and the [iconic and occasionally elusive geoduck](#).



Natural Resources Conservation Service - Washington

July 2022

State Conservationist

Allocations & obligations

By Roylene Comes At Night

NRCS-WA State Conservationist

I'm proud to say we are on track to obligate all \$21.6 million that our national headquarters allocated to us for our Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) this year! We actually have a backlog, which might carry over to next year. I say might because we did not receive any of the additional funds we requested.

In a way, that's good news, because by having a backlog of contracts, we are showing national headquarters that we have a real need here. Producers across Washington are working hard to conserve their resources, and they need assistance. Over the next few years, carrying a backlog should result in receiving more funding for our programs, enhancing our ability to help people help the land!

Another pride point for me is our obligation rate. As of June 27, we have allocated \$17.1 million of the \$21.6 million allocated. That's 79.2% at the end our

third quarter! We are well ahead of where we were at in previous years, and we're running second in the West Region for the best rate. This is all thanks to the hard work of folks across the state, who are enabling producers to get started on their projects sooner in the year, due to earlier access to funds.

The Conservation Stewardship Program is also looking good. We have a total of 183 eligible applications, of which 42 are Historically Underserved clients. We have a total allocation of \$13.3 million for the program, and as with EQIP, we have more applications than funding.

As you can see, we are proving we have a real need here. I am so proud of my staff, our wonderful partners, and producers implementing conservation measures across the state. None of this could happen without everyone. While it is a bit disappointing that we did not receive additional funds, I'm very committed to continue working with national headquarters to receive a larger initial allocation and any of the additional requests we submit in support of our producers.

As we keep up this great work, together, I'm certain we'll see the fruits of our labor over the next few years.



Conservationist Updates

West Area

By David Rose

West Area Conservationist

Staff Actions:

We currently have made selections for Resource Conservationist (RC) positions in Olympia, South Bend, Bremerton, and Puyallup.

Rebecca Anderson Bellanca has been selected for the RC position in Olympia. Her most recent position is in Texas. Her start date is July 18, 2022.

Annie Konjevoda has been selected for the RC position in Puyallup. She is currently a Soil Conservationist in Puyallup. Her start date was July 3, 2022.

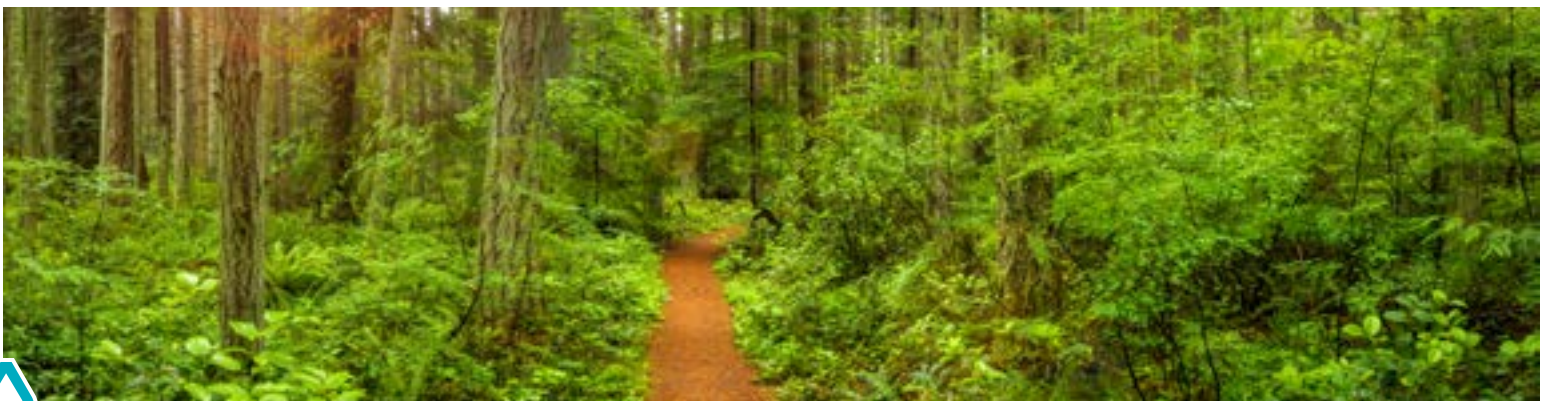
Noah Bates has been selected for the Area Resource Conservationist position at the Olympia Area Office. He is coming to us from the RC position in Montesano. His start date was July 3, 2022.

Sarah Tanuvasa, Northwest Team District Conservationist (DC), is at basic training and then advanced training with the Air Force. She will be gone for several months. We are very proud of her commitment to serve her country. Josh Hall, current RC in Lake Stevens, is acting DC serving throughout most of Sarah's absence.

Amy Hendershot, Puget Sound DC, has been on detail to the National Office for Urban Conservation program assistance. Amy has been doing great work on this team, which supports us here in WA very well. Frank Curtin, current RC in Bremerton, is acting DC serving throughout most of Amy's absence.

Program Update:

Current situation for EQIP has the West Area wrapping up contracting for this year. So far, we've obligated 101 contracts for over \$2.9 million, with 12 more to go.



Central Area

By Austin Shero

Central Area Conservationist

Conservation Districts (CDs) across the Central Area have held their annual Local Working Group (LWG) meetings for the year with the Big Bend Team holding theirs in late February, the North Central Team holding theirs in March and the South Central Team held theirs in mid-April. A statewide Tribal Local Working Group was also held in late May. Each LWG had great discussion between producers, agencies, and partners. I very much support our LWGs and the opportunities they create. It is an amazing relationship we have with CDs, partners and producers, and one I'm happy to continue to invest heavily in. I can't imagine where we would be without this partnership!

Partners and agencies continue to build their efforts in the Odessa Aquifer area. This group has been working for over a decade, I'm told, but is getting significant traction to address irrigation water quantity issues in the area. It is exciting to see the collaborative work being done between local, state, and federal officials, as well as the local producers and partner groups.



Conservation leaders, and some family members, from the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC), Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington (NRCS-WA), Grant County Conservation District (GCDD), and East Columbia Basin Irrigation District (ECBID), pose for a group photo near a siphon barrel left over from the construction of the Lind Coulee Siphon, east of Warden, Washington, June 9, 2022. The leaders visited various sites around the area to gain a better understanding of the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program (OGWRP). (USDA/NRCS-WA photo by Nate Gallahan.)

NRCS WA is happy to work with this group to solve major resource concerns on an area wide basis.

The NRCS Central Area is working through our Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract obligations for Fiscal Year 2022. We're on track to obligate 63 EQIP contracts for \$9.7 million. We're proud to fund this high quality conservation, and even more excited to see this conservation

on the ground!

I had the pleasure of meeting many Conservation District partners, and staff, at the annual WADE conference in June. It was truly an honor to be included in the event, and one I'd love to continue in future years! It was fantastic to develop, and continue some relationships with the tremendous partners we work with.



East Area

By Aubrey Hoxie

East Area Conservationist

(Photos courtesy of Ducks Unlimited)

Hello partners and greetings from the East side of the state. We're visiting another one of our easements for this update and looking at the great success that was put into this project. This 110-acre WRP easement was closed back in 2015 and has included many partners and contributions to get to the point we're at today. Through agreements and partnerships, Ducks Unlimited has been a big player in working with the landowner and organizing the restoration for this property.

Also, monies from Department of Ecology's Clean Water Act program were also used in this project, for plantings on the easement, and this was done in cooperation from Pend Oreille and Lincoln County Conservation Districts. In 2020, restoration was completed on the property, which included delevelling an old dike on the northern end of the property, upgrading a stream crossing, adding in two earthen berms and water control structures into other depressions. All structures are fully functioning. Following construction, plantings and buffers were planted in 2021.

As you all know, 2021 was one of the worst drought years on record but allowed for most of the grass seedings to take because the wetland held water for most of the summer, into fall. Last fall, seedlings were planted in areas throughout the easement, and some in enclosures to ensure a higher survivability.

In visiting the easement this month, we've seen near record flooding appear, and the wetland is acting as a wetland should. Onsite, many types of waterfowl were seen, and some elk in the higher treed portions of the easement.



Ecological Sciences

Additional scenarios incoming

By Robert D. Evans

NRCS-WA State Resource Conservationist

When I took the reigns as the State Resource Conservationist a few months ago, one of my priorities was to take a look at the list of available practice scenarios available to help solve conservation challenges statewide. There were quite a few that we had not adopted yet, so my team and I have been busy at pulling all of the levers required to adopt them into our local library of solutions.

These scenarios are important because they not only include options to resolve conservation challenges, but also update the costs associated with them. While we look at adopting new scenarios every year, this year is a bit different because we have dozens of new ones that could become available specifically for our urban and small farm communities. I'm both excited, and a bit nervous, because all of these scenarios must be run through a process that doesn't guarantee will be able to utilize them.

We have initially introduced these scenarios into the



NRCS-WA funded high tunnels on a Urban Ag producer's land in Spokane Valley. (USDA/ NRCS-WA photo by Adrian Melendez)

Pacific Payment Region, where professionals from both California and Oregon are reviewing and determining whether they concur with them. If they do, then all of us are able adopt them.

Of course, there are challenges that pertain to this process too that happen nationally and locally. Economists reconsider the price of components of each scenario to account for changes in the market (think labor, materials, equipment).

There are also restrictions for how many scenarios a practice may have, which can be challenging when considering additional scenarios for that

practice. Also, new scenarios or cost components may need to be developed to best fit the needs of the region. Along these lines, NRCS-WA is seeking to add a cost component for foregone income into various vegetative practices that could help better incentivize buffers.

Ultimately, adoption of these scenarios is critical for NRCS-WA and our partners to be able adapt to the ever-evolving needs of agriculture and conservation. I look forward to refining, improving, and implementing these scenarios to best support all of the good conservation work happening statewide!



Management and Strategy

NRCS Washington FY22 Hiring Actions

Chas Scripser

Assitant State Conservationist-M&S

Numerous hiring actions have been processed during FY22, with 23 vacancies having been filled to date, and another 53 hiring actions are currently in process. In addition, 39 positions have been prioritized to be filled pending funding and staffing cap allowances. The vacancies that have occurred and positions that are in process or prioritized are a mix of positions that were vacant due to attrition as well as positions that would be new to Washington NRCS. We continue to work with the FPAC Business Center HR Staffing Team to address the delays and backlog of hiring actions for our positions.



FY22 Filled Positions	Location
District Conservationist	Chehalis
Program Support Assistant	Chehalis
Pathways (Rangeland)	Clarkston
Pathways (Agronomist)	Colfax
Soil Conservationist	Davenport
Soil Conservationist - Recent Graduate	Ephrata
Tribal Scholar	Everson
Range Management	Goldendale
Resource Conservationist	Mt Vernon
Engineer	Olympia
Resource Conservationist	Pasco
Resource Conservationist	Port Angeles
Resource Conservationist	Prosser
Agronomist / Soil Con	Pullman
Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Puyallup
Area Conservationist	Spokane
Area ENG	Spokane
ASTC - Management & Strategy	Spokane
Business Support Specialist	Spokane
Outreach Coordinator	Spokane
State Agronomist	Spokane
State Resource Conservationist	Spokane
Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Vancouver



Management and Strategy Cont.

Hiring Actions in Process	Location	Hiring Actions in Process	Location
Resource Conservationist	Bremerton	Administrative Assistant	Olympia
District Conservationist	Chehalis	Area Easement position	Olympia
Soil Conservationist	Colfax	Area Program Specialist	Olympia
Forester	Colville	Area Resource Conservationist	Olympia
Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Colville	Resource Conservationist	Olympia
Program Support Assistant	Colville	Civil Engineer	Pasco
Rangeland Mgmt	Colville	Pathways (Agronomy)	Pasco
Resource Conservationist	Colville	Biological Science Tech	Pullman
Soil Conservation Technician	Colville	Biological Science Tech	Pullman
Soil Con Tech	Davenport	Pathways (Natural Resources)	Puyallup
Soil Conservationist	Davenport	Resource Conservationist	Puyallup
Soil Conservationist	Davenport	Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Ritzville
Soil Conservationist Recent Graduate	Davenport	Resource Conservationist	South Bend
Resource Conservationist	Dayton	Administrative Specialist	Spokane
Administrative Assistant	Ephrata	Secretary	Spokane
Area Agronomist	Ephrata	Area Agronomist	Spokane
Area Easement position	Ephrata	Area Easement position	Spokane
Area Resource Conservationist	Ephrata	Grants and Agreements Specialist	Spokane
Central Area Program Liaison	Ephrata	Program Anaylst (Easements)	Spokane
Engineer	Ephrata	Watershed Specialist	Spokane
Program Support Assistant	Ephrata	Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Vancouver
Resource Conservationist	Ephrata	Soil Conservationist	Walla Walla
Soil Conservationist-Recent Graduate FY 22	Ephrata	Resource Conservationist	Waterville
Soil Conservationist Recent Graduate	Everson	District Conservationist	Yakima
Soil Conservationist	Lake Stevens	Program Support Assistant	Yakima
Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Okanogan	Engineer	Yakima /Wenatchee /Ephrata
Resource Conservationist	Okanogan		



Engineering

Odessa Groundwater Aquifer Replacement Project

Larry Johnson

State Conservation Engineer

East Columbia Basin Irrigation District has received \$783,000 through the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to begin the development of a watershed plan for the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District (ECBID) – Odessa Subarea Special Study (OSSS) area. Developing a watershed plan will consider alternatives described in the OSSS Environmental Impact Study (EIS) as well as other documents supporting the project. The watershed plan will outline alternatives to address agricultural water management and watershed protection of the Odessa aquifer within the OSSS area. There is a federal, state, and private partnership which includes state level initiative and partnered program to limit depletion of the Odessa aquifer. The partner's concern is that further aquifer depletion will cause severe economic and environmental consequences. The project is limited to replacing ground water supplies (water from the Odessa aquifer) with water from the Columbia Basin Project surface water supply system.

June 22, 2022 Update

Progress has been made and NRCS fully anticipates that the project agreement will be completed and signed obligating the funding that NRCS-WA has received for developing and completing a Watershed Plan. The project Sponsor will receive this funding to complete the Plan with

NRCS assistance. Once the agreement is signed, the Watershed Planning activities will be completed over the next 3 to 5 years.

The project is limited to replacing ground water supplies (water from the Odessa aquifer) with water from the Columbia Basin Project surface water supply system.

Preliminary Investigation Feasibility Studies

A Preliminary Investigation Feasibility Report (PIFR) is required prior to requesting funding to develop a watershed plan. The preliminary investigation feasibility report is a brief study, using existing data and field information. The purpose of the investigation is to provide reasonable assurance that a feasible plan can be developed that addresses one or more Public Law 83-566 purposes and that there are no apparent insurmountable obstacles.

Completed PIFRs: City of College Place

The City of College Place, which is in southern Walla Walla County just west of the city of Walla Walla in southeastern Washington state, is requesting assistance to plan and implement a project that addresses issues with flood control, water quality, stormwater delivery reliability, and public safety within the city. The purpose of the project is to address the flooding, stormwater conveyance, implementation of stormwater treatment to reduce pollutants, and ways to protect, enhance, and restore natural habitat conditions, surface water, and groundwater sources.

Sponsor	Project Location	Project Purpose
Clallam County/Quileute Tribe	Bogachiel River	River Restoration/Fish Habitat
Chelan County	Wenatchee River	River Restoration/Fish Habitat
Stevens County	Colville River	River Restoration
Whatcom County	Nooksack River	Flood Control
City of Brewster	Okanogan County	Flood Control
City of Oakesdale	Whitman County	Flood Control
City of Othello	Grant County	Groundwater Recharge
Kittitas CD/Irrigation Districts	Cascade Irrigation District	Fish Barrier Removal

Clallam County

Clallam County is requesting assistance to plan and implement a project that would provide the necessary storage to address the water use inefficiency and improve the management of water resources in the watershed. The proposed Dungeness Off-Channel Reservoir project would create a 1,600-acre-foot, off-channel storage reservoir southwest of the City of Sequim. The reservoir would be in line with existing irrigation facilities that would divert water from the Dungeness River using gravity fed canals during times of high flows. The water would then be stored and released as needed to aid in the delivery of irrigation waters to approximately 3,200 acres of local agricultural land. The reservoir water would be used in place of the Dungeness River diversions during times of low flow, thus restoring stream flows in the river to aid in the recovery of

the endangered fish population throughout the river.

Potential Projects

NRCS-WA has received additional inquiries from potential Watershed Project Sponsors from around the State. The table below provides an overview of requests for assistance that have been received over the past 12 months. NRCS-WA staff have been working closely with all the potential project sponsors to help them understand the basic eligibility requirements of the Small Watershed Program. Once a project activity has been found to meet the basic eligibility requirements, NRCS would fund and complete a PIFR to further vet the project for eligibility and potential barriers to completing the project.

Urban Practice Payment Scenarios

Small scale, urban agriculture pioneers are taking action in their

communities, growing not only fresh, healthy produce, but also providing jobs, beautifying their neighborhoods, and offering access to fresh, healthy food in areas where grocery stores are sparse.

As American agriculture continues to grow in new directions, NRCS conservation assistance is growing along with it. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance for assistance for small scale growers in areas such as Soil Health, Irrigation and Water Conservation, Weeds and Pests, and High Tunnels. Additional information can be found at the following NRCS National link: [Urban Agriculture | NRCS \(usda.gov\)](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/urban-agriculture)

In preparation for next fiscal year, NRCS-WA technical staff are in the process of establishing/adopting practice scenarios optimized for the small-scale agricultural operations, more typical of urban settings.



Partnerships

National Water Quality Incentives Program (NWQI) Update

By Nick Vira

State Partnership Liason

As USDA's premiere water quality initiative, NWQI provides a path to accelerate voluntary, on-farm conservation where they can deliver the greatest benefits for clean water.

Now in its eleventh year, the National Water Quality Initiative is a partnership among NRCS, state water quality agencies and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify and address impaired water bodies through voluntary conservation. NRCS provides targeted funding for financial and technical assistance in small watersheds most in need and where farmers can use conservation practices to make a difference. First a watershed is enrolled for the "planning phase" where a comprehensive watershed inventory plan will be developed and then once developed it can move into the "implementation phase" where it can receive dedicated funding from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Conservation systems include practices that promote soil health, reduce erosion and lessen nutrient runoff, such as filter strips, cover crops, reduced tillage and manure management. These practices not only benefit natural resources but enhance agricultural productivity and profitability by improving soil health and optimizing the use of agricultural inputs.



State water quality agencies and other partners contribute additional resources for watershed planning, implementation and outreach. They also provide resources for monitoring efforts that help track water quality improvements over time.

NWQI has been extended through Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, with some updates to strengthen program delivery. Updates include a focus on watershed assessment and planning and use of multi-year budgets to demonstrate long-term commitment in assisting water quality efforts.

Nationally, NRCS invested over \$30 million in targeted assistance to help farmers and ranchers improve water quality in high-priority streams and rivers across the country in 2021. In FY22, NRCS will have 220 watersheds receiving financial assistance, and 283 watersheds total that will be developing watershed assessments and outreach strategies.



In Washington, we began our focused investment in water quality in Whatcom County by providing dedicated funding to Wiser Lake Creek – Nooksack River, Tenmile Creek, and Fishtrap Creek. Since then, we have invested nearly \$10 million dollars in the three Whatcom watersheds. In subsequent years, we expanded our water quality efforts to include Lower Crab Creek in Grant and Adams Counties, Lower Mill

Creek in Walla Walla County, as well as Spring Creek Union Flat Creek in Whitman County. Currently, the Lower Crab Creek and Lower Mill Creek watershed projects are completing the planning phase of NWQI and are expected to graduate into the implementation phase in FY23. Spring Creek- Union Flat Creek began the implementation phase in FY2022.

Since 2012, NRCS has worked with more than 4,000 producers nationally to adopt conservation practices on more than 1,000,000 acres in priority watersheds through NWQI. To date, at least 11 impaired water bodies have been improved and subsequently scheduled for de-listing or otherwise removed from NWQI due to successful water quality improvements.

Water quality is improving in NWQI watersheds. State water quality agency partners report that 36% of NWQI monitoring watersheds show an improvement in water quality in at least one of the NWQI-monitored pollutants (based on 2017-2020 data). Further, 73% of these improvements can be attributed to or associated with agricultural conservation practices implemented by farmers and ranchers.

For FY2023, NRCS will withdraw the Fishtrap Creek watershed from NWQI. Implementation phase funding will continue to be provided for Wiser Lake Creek – Nooksack River, Tenmile Creek, and Spring Creek-Union Flat Creek. Please note even though NWQI watersheds may be removed from the program, eligible producers can still apply and participate in general EQIP and many other NRCS conservation programs.



Public Affairs

Enhancing our interagency communication cooperation

By Nate Gallahan

State Public Affairs Specialist

I firmly believe that to enhance conservation across the state, we need to enhance our communications as conservation family. To do so requires not only knowledge, skills, and abilities, but relationships and synchronization of our communications.

In the past month, I've had the opportunity to meet with many of my fellow communications professionals and was continually reminded of how important these relationships are, and will be working tirelessly to improve them, and leverage them to better communicate the importance of what we do, as a family of like-minded conservationists.

For example, we are working closely with the Grant County Conservation District, East Columbia Basin Irrigation District, Columbia Basin Development League, Department of Ecology, and the Bureau of Reclamation, within a communications sub-committee supporting the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program. The program will provide surface water from the Federal Columbia Basin Project (CBP) to replace groundwater from declining

irrigation wells in the Odessa Subarea. Through our sub-committee, we're able to brainstorm creative ways to effectively communicate with landowners to share with them important information about the project. We're also able to 'align our messaging' so that each agency is talking the same talk, to prevent confusion.

Other examples include enhancing our relationship with the Washington State Conservation Commissions' Communications, Partnership, and Outreach (CPO) Committee. We look forward to building a close relationship not only with the commission, but with all the communications professionals from the Conservation Districts who attend as well.

Then, we're very excited about joining in on the Quarterly Educator Meetings hosted by Kimberly Kogler, an education specialist with the Okanogan CD. We're joining with the intent of finding ways to assist and empower education outreach specialists across the state.

I write all of that to write this, if any of you know of any other organizations or committees out there that I could join or be part of to better assist and align our communications, please let send me an email. Because the better we are at communicating with one another, the better we will all be at communicating with the communities of folks that mean so much to us.



Programs

Program	Allocation	Apps	Contracts	Obligation/ Awards	Notes
CSP Renewal FY22	\$4,500,000	29	29	\$4,378,962	All high screened eligible applications were funded. All remaining funds returned to NHQ
CSP Classic	\$13,300,000	234	—		CSP classic batching deadline is 7/7/2022
CSP Renewal FY23	NA	60	—		Contracting will begin in November 2022
EQIP Classic	\$21,600,000	502	239	\$16,746,953	In the process of contracting at the time of this report.
EQIP CIC	\$665,150	31	4	\$726,768	In the process of contracting at the time of this report
RCPP-EQIP	NA	24	1	\$50,000	Each RCPP project area has their own funding amount. This is not a yearly allocation
RCPP-CSP	NA	19	—	—	Each RCPP project area has their own funding amount. This is not a yearly allocation
FY22 RCPP Projects	NA	2			Selected projects are awarded by NHQ
ACEP-ALE	\$3,499,395	6	2	\$420,000	Applications are in the process of being obligated
ACEP-WRE	\$498,750	NA	NA	NA	Funds are being used for Stewardship measures on existing WRP/WRE easements
RCPP-ACEP-ALE	NA	5	—	—	3 application packets were incomplete, were determined ineligible and provided appeal rights. 2 applications were determined ineligible (FSA records, exceeded 67% NIPF) and provided appeal rights
RCPP-HFRP	NA	7	—	—	Selected landowners requested cancellation



NRCS News

NRCS-WA participates in Lind Field Day

By Adrian Melendez

NRCS-WA Public Affairs

Lind, Wa - NRCS-WA hosted an informational table set-up and was on hand to answer questions about programs and services at Washington State University's Lind Field Day at the Lind Dryland Research Station in Lind, Wash., June 16.

The research station's main studies and priorities are wheat breeding, winter wheat emergence, alternative crops, weed and disease control, soil fertility, erosion control, and residue management.

Participants of the event had the opportunity to learn about new and upcoming weed sprayer



technologies, alternative oil seeds, winter and spring wheat breeding, wheat diseases, as well as hear from guest speakers from the Washington Grain Commission and Washington Association of Wheat Growers.

NRCS-WA representatives on hand to answer questions from

the event attendees were Ritzville soil conservationist Eric Choker, state agronomist Kevin Davis, and outreach coordinator Kris Mills.

"It's fantastic to be able to attend in person," said Kevin about being able to be out and interact more with the public after more than two years of pandemic lockdowns. "This is a good forum for us to be able to attend and a great source of information."

The Field Day participation is one of the first events Kris was not only responsible for organizing, but the first one he's attended as the new NRCS-WA Outreach Coordinator.

"I think it went well," said Kris about NRCS' involvement in the event. "The important thing is we get back out and start interacting in person with the communities and people we can assist and remind the public that we're here to help and an available resource."



NRCS celebrates Pride, trials new outreach process

By Nate Gallahan

NRCS-WA Public Affairs

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wa – The USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation District in Washington celebrated Pride Month by hosting a booth at the Spokane Pride Festival in Spokane’s Riverfront Park, June 11.

The booth, which was borne of the partnership between Misty Seaboldt, LGBTQ+ Special Emphasis Program Manager, and Kris Mills, the newly hired State Outreach Coordinator, was staffed by six NRCS-WA employees along with six family members.

Participating in the Pride Festival served three purposes. First, it gave the agency a chance to celebrate, acknowledge, and appreciate the LGBTQ+ community. Second, it raised awareness of careers in conservation. And third, it allowed NRCS in Washington a chance to trial a new outreach process, where Public Affairs staff managed all the logistics of the event, so that people staffing the booth only had to worry about setting things up and staffing the booth on the big day.

Regarding the first goal, of celebrating Pride, it may seem to many that introducing your spouse to your coworkers is a rudimentary affair, but that’s not the case for many folks in the world of work.

“For me, this is the first job I have ever felt safe about being open, and I’ve been married for over 20 years,” said Angela Williams, a Rangeland Management Specialist with the Snake River Team. “This is the first time we have been able to be open. This agency makes you feel safe in that manner. It’s really important that we’re visible, so that everybody at this event gets that same vibe.”

Participation in the Pride Festival also helped reflect NRCS’s commitment to diversity. “Diversity is so important because it gives you a different perspective from folks based off of their completely different life experiences,” said Seaboldt.

“This is a place where people are accepted for who they are,” she said. “This is a place where people can see other people who are like them or maybe different than them, but it always broadens your



perspective. This is definitely more people focused in general than just farmer and landowner focused, and that’s needed sometimes.”

Participation also offered NRCS staff with the opportunity to recruit and raise awareness of careers in conservation.

“As the kids come through, we have a chance to talk with them a lot about careers in conservation,” Seaboldt said. “Just during this event we’ve had a few young ag engineers stop in and talk with us about the opportunities we can offer them.”

The final piece of the event puzzle was shaped in the form of logistical support, provided by Mills. Having been hired in the past five months, he’s been busy building an outreach program geared toward assisting staff across the state with their outreach opportunities.

“Our goal in Public Affairs is to handle logistical support for outreach events across the state,” Mills said. “If people need resources like materials, booths, chairs or pop-ups, you name it, we’re here to help in any capacity that’s needed.”

Seaboldt was one of the first staff members to make use of the new process.

“Kris was able to secure the space, and all the materials, and get it all packaged up, so I didn’t have to deal with it, and that was super nice,” Seaboldt said. “It was really really handy not having to worry about it because I can tell you everything about CSP until my head falls off, but when it comes to knowing what stuff needs to be handed out or how to manage the 889 form, I just don’t know.”

But Public Affairs does, “and we’re fully committed to helping make outreach opportunities as easy and simply as possible for our field staff,” Mills said.

Keeping Crab Creek healthy

NRCS-WA continues effort to restore and preserve creek habitat

By Adrian Melendez

NRCS-WA Public Affairs

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wa - NRCS Washington, along with volunteers with the Lincoln Conservation District, recently completed the planting of more than 3,500 of trees on private land, part of a conservation easement near Davenport, Washington.

The conservation project is part of a joint effort between the landowner and NRCS-WA to restore and preserve the natural habitat around Crab Creek and help prevent erosion of the creek bank.

NRCS-WA Area Resource Conservationist Jeff Kuhlmann has been leading the conservation



effort on the property since 2007 and working with landowner Carl Hedreen during the restoration efforts to keep the creek and surrounding land healthy.

Carl is happy with the work NRCS and the volunteers have done over the years and expressed his gratitude.

“The crews that come out here are doing a great job. It’s been difficult to get trees established and growing along the bank due to deer, voles and floods, but the persistence is working,” Carl said.

Jeff said that teams will usually plant between 5-6 thousand trees per year on the easement and has split up plantings the last couple years between Spring and Fall to see if that helps getting the plants established to their new homes. He agrees with Carl that the job is a constant battle, but it’s a battle worth fighting for the health of the creek and the life that calls it home.

“There are huge crawfish in there and some of the biggest redband trout I’ve ever seen,” said Jeff. “For a creek system that has had little to no vegetative cover

for years the water quality is amazing, and we’d like to keep it that way.”

Jeff and his team will be back at it again this Fall to plant an additional 1,500 trees and continue the hard work of protecting the creek and the life it supports for future generations.





Forest roads can be a rill issue for environmental health

By Adrian Melendez

NRCS-WA Public Affairs

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wa -

A group of NRCS-WA team members and conservation district employees had the opportunity to participate in hands on Forest Road Inventory training at Mount Spokane State Park, June 15.

During the training participants learned how forest roads that are built poorly and near streams can have negative impacts to environments and eco systems down stream as well as the effects of rill erosion can play. Rill erosion happens when water from rainfall doesn't soak into the soil, but instead runs across the ground instead, cutting a channel into the roads and surface causing erosion.

"Forest roads are often large contributors to sediment delivery

into our streams, and identifying those issues is the first critical step in mitigation," said Jeff Paulson, Forester from Okanogan who took part in the training. "The training did a great job not just telling us, but also showing us how a little rill erosion on the road surface can turn into a massive resource concern downstream. Also, I learned that for a variety of reasons, forest roads are often poorly placed; so, we should always consider decommissioning as an option."

RCPP civil engineer Lynelle Knehans said the recent rain the area received provided a great opportunity for the training and gave everyone a good range of examples for resource concerns on forest roads.

"Untreated forest roads can cause poor water quality and fish

habitat degradation," she said. "The participants were looking for direct erosion into streams as well as undersized culverts and fish passage barriers."

By the end of the training participants now had more tools and knowledge to identify issues with forest roads and rill erosion to better help them identify issues while in the field and how to help correct them.

"My takeaway from the training was that as planners, we need to keep our eyes on the road," said Jeff.



West Palouse leads the way in CSP

By Adrian Melendez

NRCS-WA Public Affairs

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wa - The West Palouse Team are setting the standard for Conservation Stewardship Program applications in FY22, leading the way with more than 30% of the total applications in the state.

West Palouse Team District Conservationist Cari Roepke attributed the team's success partly due to the popularity of the program and what it can do for landowners and producers.

"A lot of our applications are renewals from previous years, and it's been a popular program and people like it," she said.

Cari said she thinks word of mouth between producers and landowners talking about their experience with CSP is one key to their success and much of the work by the team has been in nutrient management, pest management and residue management with no-till or reduced till.

Resource Conservationist Dick Erickson has worked with what is now known as the West Palouse Team for 29 years and has been living in Davenport since 1993. Dick said the keys to the team's success is outreach, solid communication, and great customer service.

"When (customers) ask if they should consider applying or reapplying, we always say yes. We tell them that they should consider spending the time to study the available enhancements in detail," he said. "Many times, we invited them over to our desks to visually show them on our computer screens



The West Palouse Team from left to right: Ritzville Service Center; Eric Choker, Lauren Samaniego, Marika Kearsley, Davenport Service Center; Cari Roepke, Dick Erickson, Brandon Davis. (USDA/NRCS-WA photo by Adrian Melendez)

how easy it is to access the detailed enhancement information on the Washington NRCS website. If they tell us that they don't have a computer or if they lack computer skills, then we take the extra time to provide printed materials."

Cari added that clear communication with the customer is not only necessary for success, but clear communication across the whole team is paramount.

"With this large of a team I try to be as open and communicate as much as I can. I don't bury information and think things are not a big deal," she said.

Dick also said another key to success is working with the local conservation district to help promote the program and keeping it simple.

"Ask the Conservation District to help advertise the CSP program and promote CSP applications. Try to keep contracts from being too complicated or too challenging for the applicants," said Dick. "I really think good straightforward contracts help create good experiences for our (customers). Then word of mouth takes over."



USDA to Allow Producers to Request Voluntary Termination of Conservation Reserve Program Contract

USDA Announces Additional Flexibilities to Help Address Threats to Global Food Security

WASHINGTON, May 26, 2022 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will allow Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) participants who are in the final year of their CRP contract to request voluntary termination of their CRP contract following the end of the primary nesting season for fiscal year 2022. Participants approved for this one-time, voluntary termination will not have to repay rental payments, a flexibility implemented this year to help mitigate the global food supply challenges caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and other factors. Today, USDA also announced additional flexibilities for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

“Putin’s unjustified invasion of Ukraine has cut off a critical source of wheat, corn, barley, oilseeds, and cooking oil, and we’ve heard from many producers who want to better understand their options to help respond to global food needs,” said Zach Ducheneaux, Administrator of USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA). “This announcement will help producers make informed decisions about land use and conservation options.”

FSA is mailing letters to producers with expiring acres that detail this flexibility and share other options, such as re-enrolling sensitive acres in the CRP Continuous signup and considering growing organic crops. Producers will be asked to make the request for voluntary termination in writing through their local USDA Service Center.

If approved for voluntary termination, preparations can occur after the conclusion of the primary nesting season. Producers will then be able to hay, graze, begin land preparation activities and plant a fall-seeded crop before October 1, 2022. For land in colder climates, this flexibility may allow for better establishment of a winter wheat crop or better prepare the land for spring planting.

Organic Considerations

Since CRP land typically does not have a recent history of pesticide or herbicide application, USDA is encouraging producers to consider organic production. USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to help producers plan and implement conservation practices, including those that work well for organic operations, such as pest management and mulching. Meanwhile, FSA offers cost-share for certification costs and other fees.

Other CRP Options

Participants can also choose to enroll all or part of their expiring acres into the Continuous CRP signup for 2022. Important conservation benefits may still be achieved by re-enrolling sensitive acres such as buffers or wetlands. Expiring water quality practices such as filter strips, grass waterways, and riparian buffers may be eligible to be reenrolled under the Clean Lakes, Estuaries, and Rivers (CLEAR) and CLEAR 30 options under CRP. Additionally, expiring continuous CRP practices such as shelterbelts, field windbreaks, and other buffer practices may also be re-enrolled to provide benefits for organic farming operations. ([Read Full Article](#))



Biden-Harris Administration Drought Resilience Interagency Working Group Releases Summary Report, Marks One Year Since Interagency Coordination

Interagency effort to address drought issues through existing and new programs and resources from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

WASHINGTON, June 1, 2022 – The Biden-Harris Administration today released the Drought Resilience Interagency Working Group’s (IWG) Summary Report outlining the actions taken to date to improve drought-stricken communities’ longer-term resilience to drought through financial and technical assistance. Last month marked one year since the establishment of the Drought Resilience IWG as part of the Biden-Harris Administration’s whole-of-government approach to confronting climate change. [Download the Summary Report.](#)

“Intense drought and climate change continue to threaten major economic drivers in rural communities, disrupt food systems and water supplies, endanger public health, jeopardize the integrity of critical infrastructure, and exacerbate wildfires and floods,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “Through the IWG, collaboration and coordination among federal agencies has increased in an effort to more effectively deploy resources and support during these intense, drought-stricken times. We have also worked to improve and expand our disaster assistance programs to better help producers recover and build resiliency for those being impacted by drought.”

“The dangerous impacts of climate change and drought are being felt across America. Through the Drought Resilience Interagency Working Group and President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Biden-Harris administration is quickly ushering every resource available to drought-impacted communities to provide relief now, and make investments long into the future,” said Interior Secretary Deb Haaland. “We remain committed to an all-of-government approach and collaboration with Tribes, irrigators, businesses and adjoining communities to address the impacts of the drought crisis and work together on long-term solutions.”

The U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) co-chair the Drought Resilience IWG, which was created under



the White House’s National Climate Task Force.

The Drought Resilience IWG agencies are working cooperatively in a whole-of-government manner, to address drought issues through existing programs and resources. There are many historic opportunities provided by the President’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to provide critical funding to address water challenges, which includes drought. The Drought Resilience IWG will facilitate interagency coordination to effectively deploy \$13 billion in water-related investments, including \$12.4 billion at DOI (including investments outlined [here](#)) and \$918 million at USDA.

Key actions since the Drought Resilience IWG creation include:

In fiscal year 2021, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and USDA coordinated drought relief efforts in some of the most drought-stricken areas in the West. This included a collective investment of \$38 million (\$23 million from BOR and \$15 million from USDA) in the Klamath Basin to help farmers and Tribes. ([Read Full Article](#))



USDA Receives Overwhelming Interest for Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Opportunity

Second Funding Pool Applications Showed an Increased Focus on Building Climate-Smart Markets with Small and Underserved Producers

WASHINGTON, June 16, 2022 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today that the second funding pool through the [Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities](#) opportunity received over 600 applications from over 400 groups. While USDA is in the process of calculating the total requested amount for the second funding pool, the overall interest in the opportunity already exceeds more than \$18 billion.

“The results of the second funding pool clearly demonstrate the strong demand in the U.S. agriculture and forestry industry for solutions that expand markets for American producers and forest landowners, particularly those that are small or historically underserved,” said Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Robert Bonnie. “The first funding pool more than exceeded our high expectations, and the second round received more applications than the first. We’re looking forward to going through this robust pool of applications.”

The second funding pool, which closed on Friday, June 10, included proposals from \$250,000 to \$4,999,999 that emphasize the enrollment of small and/or underserved producers, and/or monitoring, reporting and verification activities developed at minority-serving institutions.

The applicants were wide-ranging, including minority serving institutions, tribal and underserved groups, state and local governments, private companies, and many other entities from across the United States, tribal lands, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, and other territories.

First Funding Pool Submissions

The first round closed on May 6 and included over 450 proposals ranging from \$5 million to \$100 million each. The applications came from over 350 groups and covered every state in the nation, as well as tribal

lands, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

First-round proposals requested more than \$18 billion and offered to match more than \$8 billion in nonfederal dollars. These submissions are currently being reviewed and selections are anticipated later this summer.

More Information

[Frequently asked questions](#) and additional information are available on the [Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities webpage](#) on [usda.gov](#).

Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is engaged in a whole-of-government effort to combat the climate crisis and conserve and protect our Nation’s lands, biodiversity and natural resources including our soil, air and water. Through conservation practices and partnerships, USDA aims to enhance economic growth and create new streams of income for farmers, ranchers, producers and private foresters. Successfully meeting these challenges will require USDA and our agencies to pursue a coordinated approach alongside USDA stakeholders, including State, local and Tribal governments.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America’s food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [www.usda.gov](#).





Washington State Conservation Commission

July 21, 2022

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Chris Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Paige DeChambeau, Acting Communications Director

SUBJECT: Communications Update – Succession Planning & News

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

June 15, 2022, was Laura Meyer's, the SCC Communications Director, last day with the agency. Therefore, Paige DeChambeau has stepped into the Communications Director position in an acting role until after the internal recruitment of the position is completed. Concurrently, the agency is looking to expand the capacity of the communications team by adding a third position within the department and hiring for the vacant communications consultant 4 position (formerly the Outreach and Engagement Manager). Important agency communication work continues to move forward.

Requested Action:

None – information only.

Staff Contact:

Paige DeChambeau, Acting Communications Director, 360-742-9488, pdechambeau@scc.wa.gov

Background and Discussion:

Communications team updates

With the influx of money from the legislature, the communications department has seen higher demands on the work needed. There has been an increased appetite for the need to continue to tell our stories, the implementation of three new additional grant programs, and the additional workload of getting Conservation Month up and running.

There is also a need for someone to be able to take over the internal strategic planning of the agency, the Executive Director has approved the communications team to build more capacity and

revamp the structure of the team. We have started the recruitment process for the new team members. Below is a breakdown of the areas of focus for the new team.

Roles and Responsibilities

- *Communications Director*: This position will continue to focus primarily on external communications (federal and state work), will remain the primary media contact, act as webmaster and manage the communications contracts, as well as the communications team's planning, staffing, and workloads.
- *Communications Project Manager*: This position will replace the Outreach and Engagement Manager and will focus their work inward on the internal management of the organization's projects. This person will continue to guide the strategic plan work and the coordination of the needs of agency-managed programs and the collaboration work groups.
- *Communications Specialist*: This position will be the primary social media manager and will support both the external and internal work of the communications team.

Managing the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan

The work of the communications team touches all the aspects of the agency's strategic plan. We have decided to keep the management and facilitation of the plan in the communications department and plan to hire someone who can help manage the plan moving forward.

Timeline

We hope to have all of the communications team's positions filled by the fall of 2022.

Other Communications News:

The agency's communications work continues while we work on rebuilding the team.

- *Reports*: The Biennial Report is both online and printed now. We are also working on a Centennial Report for the Governor's office and a VSP report for the State Legislature.
- *Program support*: The department has helped to launch the new FPLA guidelines, the new SFF guidelines and the guidelines and website for the new Salmon Recovery Funding.
- *Social media*: We continue to work on increasing our social media presence and have revamped the agency's LinkedIn page and plan to post new job opportunities and relevant news stories to that platform along with our Facebook page.
- *Conservation Month*: We continue to work on the proposal request to find a creative service and hope to have that contract in place by Sept.

Next steps (if informational item):

The department will continue work on rebuilding the team and will hopefully have new team members to introduce at the Sept. commission meeting!