



Washington State Conservation Commission

Meeting Packet

March 16, 2023

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

Everett, 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 Kaisha Walker at 360-890-1062, or call 711 relay service. All accommodation requests should be received no later than Wednesday, March 9, 2023 to ensure preparations are appropriately made.

Online Meeting Coordinates

To participate online, please click on [this link](#) to register. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting virtually. 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll Call Introductions Pledge of Allegiance Additions/Corrections to agenda items Opening Comments by Snohomish Conservation District Tribal Welcome Song Stillaguamish Tribe's Priorities Tulalip Tribe's Priorities 	Chairman Williams Charlotte Scofield Kurt Nelson
9:35 a.m.	1.	Consent Agenda (<i>Action items</i>) Public Comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment. a) January 19, 2023 Draft Meeting Minutes	Chairman Williams

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
9:40 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.	
		b) SCC Administrative Policy Committee	Commissioner Kearney
		c) Professional Engineering Program Guidelines – Draft	Shana Joy
		d) Natural Resource Investments Program Guidelines Revisions	Shana Joy
10:15 a.m.	–	Break	
10:30 a.m.	1.	Budget and Finance (<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) Grants & Contract Procedure Manual Updates	Sarah Groth
		f) FY2023 Year End Funding and Timeline	Sarah Groth
		g) WACD Contract	Sarah Groth
11:10 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.	
		h) Grays Harbor CD Annexation of City of Aberdeen	Josh Giuntoli
11:20 a.m.	1.	Policy and Programs (<i>Action items</i>)	
		Public comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.	
		i) FPLA Beaver Valley Farm Authorization	Kate Delavan
11:45 a.m.		Recognition/Appreciation of Commissioner David Giglio	All

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
12:00 p.m.	–	LUNCH	
12:30 p.m.	2.	Commission Operations <i>(Information only)</i>	
		a) Legislative Update	Ron Shultz
		b) Conservation Month	Paige DeChambeau
1:15 p.m.	2.	District Operations <i>(Information only)</i>	
		c) District Operations & Regional Manager Report	Jean Fike
1:25 p.m.	2.	Partner Updates <i>(Information only)</i>	
		d) Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife	<i>Packet Item Only</i>
		e) National Association of Conservation Districts	<i>Packet Item Only</i>
		f) Natural Resources Conservation Service	<i>Packet Item Only</i>
		g) Center for Technical Development	<i>Packet Item Only</i>
1:40 p.m.		General SCC Update	Director Pettit
1:45 p.m.		Executive Session <i>pursuant to RCW 42.30.110: (1)(f) to receive and evaluate complaints brought against a public employee, (1)(g) to evaluate the performance of a public employee, and (1)(i) to give notice of discussion with legal counsel</i>	Commission Members
2:45 p.m.		Adjourn	Chairman Williams

TAB 1

Regular Business Meeting ~

The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission/SCC) met in-person, with the option of joining virtually, on Thursday, January 19, 2023 in Tukwila, Washington. Chairman Daryl Williams called the meeting to order at 8:35 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.*
Cherie Kearney, *Governor Appointee*
David Giglio, *Department of Ecology*
Dean Longrie, *Elected west region rep*
Harold Crose, *Elected central region rep (online)*
Jim Kropf, *Washington State University*
Mike Mumford, *Washington Association of Conservation Districts (online)*
Perry Beale, *Department of Agriculture*
Terra Rentz, *Department of Natural Resources (online)*

COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT

Christopher Pettit, *Executive Director*
Alison Halpern, *Scientific Policy Advisor*
Brian Cochran,
Jean Fike, *Regional Manager*
Kaisha Walker, *Administrative Assistant*
Karen Hills,
Kate Delavan, *Office of Farmland Preservation*
Paige DeChambeau, *Communications & Outreach Manager*
Paul D'Agnolo,
Ron Shultz, *Policy Director*
Sarah Groth, *Director of Accounting & Budget*
Shana Joy, *District Operations Manager*

Quorum present.

PARTNERS REPRESENTED

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

GUESTS ATTENDED

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Draft December 1, 2022 Business Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve the December 1, 2022 draft business meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Kropf. Motion passes.

Out of State Travel Request for the Executive Director

Motion by Commissioner Rentz to approve the SCC Executive Director and Chair to attend the National Association of Conservation Districts Legislative Spring Fly-in in Washington D.C. on March 22 & 23, 2023 along with up to 3 Commissioners. Seconded by Commissioner Longrie. Motion passes.

COMMISSION OPERATIONS

2023 Conservation Accountability & Performance Program (CAPP)

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the Conservation Accountability and Performance Program as presented in the January 19, 2023 SCC meeting packet. Seconded by Commissioner Longrie. Motion passes.

Salmon Recovery Legislation, 2023 Session

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to support the conceptual framework of the proposed HB 1215, based on the principles outlined in option 2 of the staff memo of 1/19, while supporting the retention of the proposed \$100,000,000 salmon recovery funding for the Conservation Commission in the Governor's proposed capital budget. Seconded by Commissioner Mumford. Motion passes. *(This item is listed as an information only item on the meeting agenda. Change to request action was requested and approved at the beginning of the business meeting)*

POLICY & PROGRAMS

FPLA Project Approval – Schmid Farm Funding Authorization

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve the Schmid project for funding up to \$875,000. Seconded by Commissioner Cochran. Motion passes.
Commissioner Kearney abstains.

Sustainable Farms and Fields modifications to programmatic guidelines

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve revised SFF programmatic guidelines. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passes.

DISTRICT OPERATIONS

Petition for Inclusion of Territory into the Pacific Conservation District

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve the petition for inclusion of the City of Ilwaco within the boundaries of the Pacific Conservation District. Seconded by Commissioner Kropf. Motion passes.

Kitsap Conservation District Mid-Term Supervisor Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to appoint the applicant, Chris Benson, to the conservation district board, as appropriate. Seconded by Chairman Williams. Motion passes.

Walla Walla Conservation District Mid-Term Supervisor Appointment

Motion by Vice-chair Cochran to appoint the applicant, Don Schwerin, to the conservation district board, as appropriate. Seconded by Commissioner Beale. Motion passes.

Meeting adjourned by Chairman Williams at 2:35 p.m.

Online Participants

1. Craig Nelson, Okanogan CD
2. Stuart Crane
3. Mike Kuttel Jr., Dept of Fish and Wildlife
4. Zorah Oppenheimer, Clark CD
5. Ruth Musgrave, Governor's Policy Office
6. Sarah Wilcox, WSCC
7. Jeff Schibel, Lincoln CD
8. Nate Ulrich
9. Doug Rushton, NACD
10. Robert Schmid
11. B'Elana Rhodehamel, WSCC
12. Anna Lael, Kittitas County CD
13. Peter Schmid
14. Aaron Schmid
15. Tom Salzer, WACD
16. Karla Heinitz, WSCC
17. Alicia McClendon, WSCC
18. Josh Giuntoli, WSCC
19. Sarah Moorehead, Thurston CD
20. Allisa Carlson, WSCC
21. Megan Stewart, Asotin CD
22. Rosa Mendez-Perez, King CD
23. Josh Larsen, Whitman CD
24. Josh Monagan
25. Bill Eller, WSCC
26. Ryan Williams, Cascadia CD
27. Alan Chapman, WSCC
28. Dean Hellie, Stevens County CD
29. Mike Baden, WSCC
30. Kim Williams, Clallam CD
31. Levi Keesecker, WSCC
32. Alex Case-Cohen-Pend Orielle CD
33. Brad Riehle, Asotin CD

38. Chris Porter
39. Jan Thomas, CTD
40. Sierra Young, Jefferson CD

Other In-Person Participants:

1. David Rose, NRCS
2. Mike Tobin, North Yakima CD



Washington State Conservation Commission

March 16, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members

FROM: SCC Member Policy Review Committee

SUBJECT: SCC administrative policy review/update/development

Action Item

X

Informational Item

Summary:

The commission is committed to creating safeguards prohibiting behaviors that are inconsistent with a safe and harassment-free work environment.

At the January 19, 2023, State Conservation Commission (SCC) meeting, commission members created a policy review committee to review specific administrative policies (list provided below) and to update and/or develop new policies recommended by human resources.

The SCC obtained policy templates provided to agencies for statewide use that have been pre-approved by the Assistant Attorney General's Office, Office of Financial Management State-HR, Office of Equity, and the Department of Enterprise Services. The committee revised them as appropriate to fit SCC's work environment.

During the process, the committee invited SCC staff to review and provide feedback on the proposed draft policies. Those comments were received and incorporated, as applicable, into the final drafts being presented today.

Listed below are the requested administrative policies with notes of information. Following this memo are the four proposed draft policies and process for submitting and reviewing complaints.

Policy Title	Notes (replacing or developed)
1. Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy	<i>This policy replaces current SCC policies:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">13-08 Sexual Harassment13-09 Anti-Discrimination

Policy Title	Notes (replacing or developed)
2. Respectful Work Environment Policy	<i>This policy replaces current SCC policies:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13-17 Workplace Safety • 13-06 Workplace & Domestic Violence
3. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Policy	New interim policy developed pending final input from the DEI agency assessment.
4. Discipline Policy	New policy developed for non-exempt employees. The committee is in the process of developing an additional policy/procedure for the exempt Executive Director position.
5. Process for Submitting a Complaint	<p>New procedure created from process facilitated by the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) HR.</p> <p><i>* DES provides HR services to small agencies, including the SCC.</i></p>

Requested Action:

Seeking approval to adopt policies 1-4, and the process for submitting a complaint.

Committee Members:

Commissioners: David Giglio, Cherie Kearney, Mike Mumford, and Terra Rentz

Next Steps:

While updating and developing the new policies, there were a couple of administrative policies referenced within the documents: the Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Policy and the Reasonable Accommodation Policy. The SCC has these two policies and will need to update to reflect current laws and procedures. The committee will leave these two policies to be completed by the agency's internal policy development team that will include internal review and approval by the Executive Director.



Washington State Conservation Commission

Policy Name and Number:	Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy# 23-xx <i>This policy replaces: 13-08 Sexual Harassment 13-09 Anti-Discrimination</i>
Applies to:	This policy applies to all Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) employees, applicants, contractors, and volunteers.
Effective Date:	Month XX, 2023
Approved By:	

Applies to:

This policy applies to all Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) employees, applicants, contractors, and volunteers.

Governance: Listed below are some, but not all, applicable governing requirements. Note: Laws and rules may change over time and such changes may take precedence over this policy.

- Federal law: [The Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)
- President's Executive Orders: [EO 11246](#) (as amended by [EO 11478](#) and [EO 13672](#))
- State law: [Chapter RCW 49.60 Discrimination – Human Rights Commission](#)
- State rule: [Chapter 357-25 WAC Affirmative Action](#)
- Governor's Executive order: [EO 12-02](#)

About this policy

This policy identifies and prohibits behaviors that are inconsistent with a safe and harassment-free work environment. This policy is intended to comply with the prohibitions listed in state and federal anti-discrimination laws. As of the most recent update to this policy, the following areas are protected by law from discrimination and harassment:

- Race/Color,
- Use of a Service Animal,
- National Origin,
- HIV Or Hepatitis C Status,
- Creed,
- Marital Status (except in public accommodation)
- Sex/Pregnancy
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity/Gender Expression
- Breastfeeding (in public accommodation),
- Age (40+, employment only),
- Veteran/Military Status,
- State Employee Whistleblower,
- Actual Disability, and
- Perceived Disability.

Policy

This policy identifies and prohibits behaviors that are inconsistent with a safe and harassment-free work environment.

Definitions

This policy uses the same definitions found in [RCW 49.60.040](#) (Discrimination –Human Rights Commission), [RCW 41.06.020](#) (State Civil Service Law), and by [Federal government nondiscrimination laws and regulations](#).

Safe and harassment-free work environment is a work environment free from violence and harassment.

Harassment: based on a protected classification becomes unlawful when tolerating the offensive conduct (verbal or physical) becomes a condition of continued employment, or the conduct is severe or pervasive and creates a work environment a person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive. The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or someone who is not an employee, such as a client or customer.

Other forms of harassment (including bullying) include any form of unwelcome conduct, pervasive, persistent, and unsolicited verbal, non-verbal, written, or physical conduct that is offensive and could alter the affected employee's terms and conditions of employment.

Policy Statement

The SCC will provide and promote a safe and harassment-free work environment.

The requirements of this policy are not optional.

SCC will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, or retaliation of any kind. Through enforcement of this policy and by education of employees, SCC will prevent, correct, and discipline behavior that violates this policy.

SCC employees violating this policy may be subject to disciplinary action under chapter 357-40 WAC Discipline and/or the provisions of applicable collective bargaining agreements. See the agency discipline policy.

- SCC will take appropriate and swift action up to and including dismissal to address any violation of this policy; and
- Any employee who initiates or participates in retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal.

This policy is used together with other policies.

This policy is used together with and incorporates by reference other related agency administrative policies. Specifically, the:

- Diversity Equity and Inclusion Policy,
- Respectful Workplace Policy,
- Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Policy, and the,
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy.

Policy

- A. Discrimination is illegal and prohibited by SCC. Discrimination is strictly prohibited by federal, state, and local laws, including [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#); the [Age Discrimination Act of 1975](#); the [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#); and the [Washington Law Against Discrimination](#).

It is a violation of this policy, state law, and federal law to:

- Discriminate in the provision of employment opportunities, benefits, or privileges,
- Create discriminatory work conditions, and
- Use discriminatory evaluative standards in employment if the basis of that discriminatory treatment is, in whole or in part, based on membership in a protected class, or retaliation for assisting in the investigation of a complaint.

- B. Harassment is illegal and prohibited by the SCC. Harassment, including [sexual harassment](#) (as defined by CFR [Title 29 §1604.11](#)) or creating a hostile work environment (as defined by [EEOC Notice No. 915.002](#)) is illegal. SCC will take appropriate and swift action up to and including dismissal to address any violation of this policy.

Some examples of behavior or actions that could be perceived by others to create a hostile work environment include, but are not limited to:

- Racial or ethnic epithets,
- Discriminatory verbal intimidation, ridicule, and insults,
- Denying salary increases, promotions and assignments to more desirable work that is motivated based on a protected class status,
- Yelling, verbal intimidation, ridicule or insults by a supervisor directed at a person in a protected class but not at others, and
- Jokes directed at individuals in a protected class that are unwelcome or offensive.

- C. Retaliation or attempted retaliation is illegal and prohibited by SCC.

1. No hardship, loss of benefits, or penalty may be imposed on an employee as punishment for one or more of the following:

- Filing or responding to a bona fide complaint of discrimination or harassment,
- Appearing as a witness in the investigation of a complaint, and
- Serving as an investigator.

2. Any employee who initiates or participates in retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal.

D. Certain non-disclosure agreements as a condition of employment are prohibited. SCC may not require an employee, as a condition of employment, to sign a nondisclosure agreement, waiver, or other document that prevents the employee from disclosing sexual harassment or sexual assault occurring in the workplace, at work-related events coordinated by or through the employer, or between employees, or between an employer and an employee, off the employment premises in accordance with section 1, chapter 117, Laws of 2018.

Procedures

Click here for [Process for Reporting a Complaint](#). Written process is also listed at the end of this policy.

The SCC has put in place a process to make sure protection and relief is available from any form of discrimination or sexual harassment. Protection and relief are available to all State Conservation Commission (SCC) employees, applicants, contractors, and volunteers.

Responsibilities

Managers and supervisors

Managers and supervisors shall model appropriate behavior and are responsible to:

- Make sure new employees receive training on this policy within the first six months of their employment,
- Make sure staff review this policy annually and the review is documented in the employee's personnel file,
- Consult with the HR Business Partner to determine appropriate action calculated to stop harassment and discriminatory behavior that is observed and/or of which they become aware, and
- Take appropriate corrective or disciplinary action when harassment and/or discriminatory behavior occur.
- Take immediate action upon learning of or observing harassment within the work unit

Human Resources

Human Resources will provide managers and employees with:

- Technical assistance and consultation, and
- Training to prevent harassment, discrimination, and inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature in the workplace.

Employees

Employees who feel they are being harassed are encouraged to identify the offensive behavior to the harasser either in person or in writing. If the employee is uncomfortable in confronting the offender directly or if after doing so the behavior has not stopped, the employee should immediately report violations of this policy to their supervisor and/or Human Resources. Employees are encouraged to report harassment before it becomes severe or pervasive.

[History](#)

[First Effective](#)

[Amended](#)

DRAFT

Harassment, Discrimination, or Retaliation Complaint Process

We are committed to promoting an inclusive, respectful, and safe culture. Because of this, we will respond to all complaints related to harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. To help make sure this happens, we have put in place a complaint reporting process to make sure protection and relief is available from any form of discrimination or sexual harassment. No complaint is insignificant if it means an employee doesn't feel emotionally or physically safe in the workplace.

About the complaint reporting process

This complaint process supports and is used together with these agency policies:

- Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Policy,
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy,
- Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy,
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy, and the,
- Respectful Workplace Policy.

There are occasions that must inform employees that we are under a legal obligation to respond to allegations of behaviors covered by this policy. We are committed to responding because we want to promote an inclusive, respectful, and safe culture.

Who can file a complaint?

Anyone who works, volunteers, interns, or does contracting work for the small agency can report or file a complaint. If you are a represented employee, this process will not conflict with a formal grievance process. Please refer to the [appropriate bargaining agreement](#) regarding complaints and grievances.

Should I submit a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, discontent, or unhappiness with an action, decision, or omission within the control or responsibility of the agency and includes an unresolvable problem or dispute. Use this process if the issue cannot be resolved informally at the supervisor level or falls into one of the categories below, a complaint should be submitted.

Use this process for:

- Unlawful discrimination (racial, sexual orientation, disability, religious, age, etc.)
- Personal harassment (inappropriate comments, offensive jokes, intimidation, ostracizing behavior, etc.)
- Physical harassment (hostile behavior, intimidation by destruction of property, direct threats, etc.)
- Sexual harassment
- Quid pro quo sexual harassment
- Third-party harassment (an individual outside of the organization)

- Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Retaliation

We encourage everyone to raise issues that are of concern as soon as possible. We follow a transparent, fair, and timely process for addressing complaints and problems so that:

- Everyone involved is treated equitably.
- That no one who reports a complaint is penalized or disadvantaged.
- SCC will do our best to preserve confidentiality, handle all issues with discretion and preserve a space of respect.

How do I submit a complaint?

Complaints may be made in writing or verbally. Depending on the situation and your level of comfort, you can report the issue directly to your supervisor for resolution or schedule a conversation with your [assigned HR Business Partner \(HRBP\)](#).

We encourage you to use the [Personnel Incident form](#) when making a written complaint. If you choose to submit a complaint form to a trusted supervisor, manager, member of the leadership team, or to your HRBP, follow the directions on the form.

What happens once HR receives my complaint?

The assigned HRBP will review your complaint to determine next steps based on the issue described in the complaint. In all situations, we will make sure you are kept informed of the status of your complaint. Depending on the situation, you may be asked to provide additional supporting information for your complaint – requests for more information, if needed, may come in a variety of forms.



Washington State Conservation Commission

Policy Name and #	Respectful Work Environment Policy# 23-xx This policy replaces: 13-17 Workplace Safety & 13-06 Workplace & Domestic Violence
Applies to:	This policy applies to all Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) employees, applicants, contractors, and volunteers.
Effective Date:	Month XX, 2023
Approved By:	

Applies to:

This policy applies to all Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) employees, applicants, contractors, and volunteers.

Governance: Listed below are some, but not all, applicable governing requirements. Note: Laws and rules may change over time and such changes may take precedence over this policy.

- [Executive Order 17-01: Reaffirming Washington's Commitment to Tolerance, Diversity, and Inclusiveness](#)
- [Executive Order 13-01: Veterans Transition Support](#)
- [Executive Order 13-02: Improving Employment Opportunities and Outcomes for People with Disabilities in State Government](#)
- [Directive of the Governor 16-11: LGBTQ Inclusion and Safe Place Initiative](#)
- [State Human Resources Directive 20-02](#)
- [State Human Resources Directive 20-03](#)
- [Governor Inslee's Memo to State Agencies - Inclusive and Respectful Work Environments](#)

Reason for Policy

This policy makes it clear that:

- Inclusion is necessary to create a work environment anchored to respect, dignity, equity, and civility.
- SCC is strongly committed to a positive, healthy, and professional work environment.

- All people, regardless of their position, will be treated with respect, dignity, equity, and civility.

Definitions

Disrespectful behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Offensive or inappropriate remarks, jokes, gestures, material (electronic or otherwise), or behavior,
- Yelling,
- Belittling,
- Reprimanding in the presence of others,
- Aggressive or patronizing behavior,
- Behavior that embarrasses or humiliates another,
- Micro-aggressions,
- Discrimination,
- Sexual Harassment,
- Intimidation and/or coercion,
- Gossip or spreading rumors,
- Bullying,
- Inappropriate physical contact,
- Creating processes or a work environment that do not support the ability to express respect, dignity, equity, civility, and inclusion.

Respectful behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Engaging others with an open, collaborative and cooperative approach,
- Valuing the diversity and the human rights of others regardless of their race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, veteran status, body shape/size, or any physical or mental disability,
- Recognizing the dignity of a person through courteous conduct,
- Committing to learn and develop an understanding of differing social and cultural norms,
- Taking responsibility for one's actions, displaying humility with one's own mistakes and offering others grace and forgiveness for theirs,
- Emphasizing positivity and commonality rather than opposition or negativity,
- Finding ways to be constructive in providing feedback to others.

Policy Statement

Each person at the SCC is responsible for setting positive examples and behaving in a manner that will not intentionally offend, embarrass, or humiliate others. Sometimes our actions and behaviors, can unintentionally offend others, and in these situations, it is important that we own our behavior and work to build trust and respect in our relationships.

Everyone at SCC must treat others with dignity, civility, and respect and will address situations where this does not happen. Because of this, SCC expects employees to speak up and report disrespectful behavior. SCC embraces an approach of direct communication independently to resolve issues respectfully, in recognition of SCC's

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy, while providing a safe environment for those who are uncomfortable or discouraged from communication to report disrespectful behavior.

Related policy

This policy is used with and incorporates by reference other agency policies, specifically the following:

- Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Policy;
- Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy,
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy, and the,
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy.

Failure to follow policy

The requirements of this policy are not optional. Through education of employees and enforcement of this policy, SCC will actively seek to prevent, correct, and discipline behavior that violates this policy.

Employees violating this policy may be subject to disciplinary action under chapter [357-40 WAC \(Discipline\)](#). See the agency's discipline policy.

- SCC will take appropriate and swift action up to and including dismissal to address any violation of this policy; and
- Any employee who initiates or participates in retaliation, against individuals making a complaint pursuant to this policy, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal.

Procedures

Click here for [Process for Reporting a Complaint](#). Written process is also listed at the end of this policy.

The SCC has put in place a process to make sure protection and relief is available from any form of discrimination or sexual harassment. Protection and relief is available to all State Conservation Commission employees, applicants, contractors, and volunteers.

Responsibilities

All employees

- Show care and respect for each other and create a safe space;
- Attend training on respect, civility, and dignity in the workplace within one year of date of hire or within one year of the effective date of this policy;
- Ask your supervisor for advice or support if you are not sure whether you are following this policy.
- Strive to independently resolve issues respectfully, in accordance with SCC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy.
- Report unresolved disrespectful behavior immediately.

Supervisors, managers, and leaders

- Advise employees on how to uphold the values described in this policy and support training opportunities;
- Lead by example; create and maintain a workplace that demonstrates respect and professionalism;
- Listen to employees when issues are raised; do not excuse, condone, or ignore violations of this policy;
- Address behaviors and incidents that violate this policy quickly and at the lowest appropriate level.

Executive leaders including department heads

- Jointly review this policy once a year in order to determine the success of this policy in alignment with measurable objectives developed by the DEI steering committee and agency leadership;
- In cooperation with the SCC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion steering committee and Human Resources:
 - Develop and put in place measurable objectives;
 - Establish a purposeful, cyclical review process in order to measure progress.

History
First Effective **Date**
Amended

Harassment, Discrimination, or Retaliation Complaint Process

We are committed to promoting an inclusive, respectful and safe culture. Because of this, we will respond to all complaints related to harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. To help make sure this happens, we have put in place a complaint reporting process to make sure protection and relief is available from any form of discrimination or sexual harassment. No complaint is insignificant if it means an employee doesn't feel emotionally or physically safe in the workplace

About the complaint reporting process

This complaint process supports and is used together with these agency policies:

- Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Policy
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy
- Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy
- Respectful Workplace Policy

There are occasions that must inform employees that we are under a legal obligation to respond to allegations of behaviors covered by this policy. We are committed to responding because we want to promote an inclusive, respectful and safe culture.

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Use this process for:

- Unlawful discrimination (racial, sexual orientation, disability, religious, age, etc.)
- Personal harassment (inappropriate comments, offensive jokes, intimidation, ostracizing behavior, etc.)

- Physical harassment (hostile behavior, intimidation by destruction of property, direct threats, etc.)
- Sexual harassment
- Quid pro quo sexual harassment
- Third-party harassment (an individual outside of the organization)
- Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Retaliation

We encourage everyone to raise issues that are of concern as soon as possible. We follow a transparent, fair, and timely process for addressing complaints and problems so that:

- Everyone involved is treated equitably.
- That no one who reports a complaint is penalized or disadvantaged.
- SCC will do our best to preserve confidentiality, handle all issues with discretion and preserve a space of respect.

How do I submit a complaint?

Complaints may be made in writing or verbally. Depending on the situation and your level of comfort, you can report the issue directly to your supervisor for resolution or schedule a conversation with your [assigned HR Business Partner \(HRBP\)](#).

We encourage you to use the [Personnel Incident form](#) when making a written complaint. If you choose to submit a complaint form to a trusted supervisor, manager, member of the leadership team, or to your HRBP, follow the directions on the form.

What happens once HR receives my complaint?

The assigned HRBP will review your complaint to determine next steps based on the issue described in the complaint. In all situations, we will make sure you are kept informed of the status of your complaint. Depending on the situation, you may be asked to provide additional supporting information for your complaint – requests for more information, if needed, may come in a variety of forms.



Washington State Conservation Commission

Policy Name and #	(Interim) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy# 23-xx
Applies to:	This policy applies to all Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) employees, applicants, contractors, and volunteers.
Effective Date:	Month XX, 2023
Approved By:	

It is the intent of the Commission to adopt this policy as in interim policy, pending review of the DEI assessment.

This policy sunsets: December 31, 2023

Applies to:

This policy applies to all Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) employees, applicants, contractors, and volunteers.

Governance:

Listed below are some, but not all, applicable governing requirements. Note: Laws and rules may change over time and such changes may take precedence over this policy.

- [Executive Order 17-01: Reaffirming Washington's Commitment to Tolerance, Diversity, and Inclusiveness](#)
- [Executive Order 13-01: Veterans Transition Support](#)
- [Executive Order 13-02: Improving Employment Opportunities and Outcomes for People with Disabilities in State Government](#)
- [Directive of the Governor 16-11: LGBTQ Inclusion and Safe Place Initiative](#)
- [State Human Resources Directive 20-02](#)
- [State Human Resources Directive 20-03](#)
- [Governor Inslee's Memo to State Agencies - Inclusive and Respectful Work Environments](#)
- [Executive Order 13985 | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](#)
- [Equity | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

Reason for this policy

This policy makes it clear that:

- We must embed the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of our work;
- The SCC supports and promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Definitions

Bias is a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way that's considered to be unfair. Biases may be held by an individual, group, or institution and can have negative or positive consequences.

There are two types of biases:

1. Conscious bias (also known as explicit bias), and,
2. Unconscious bias (also known as implicit bias). **Unconscious biases** are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one's tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing.

Cultural humility means an approach to respectfully engaging others with cultural identities different from your own and recognizing that no cultural perspective is superior to another.

Diversity means differences within a given setting, collective, or group. An individual is not diverse—a person is unique. Diversity is about a collective or a group and exists in relationship to others. A team, an organization, a family, a neighborhood, and a community can be diverse. A person can bring diversity of thought, experience, and trait, (seen and unseen) to a team—and the person is still an individual.

Department of Enterprise Services (DES) provides HR support to smaller agencies like WSCC.

Dominant culture means the most institutionally normalized power that is widespread and influential across societal structures and entities in which multiple cultures are present.

Equity for the purposes of the SCC means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. ([USDA NRCS](#)) Equity and fair are distinct from equality, which refers to everyone having the same treatment without accounting for differing needs or circumstances. Equity has a focus on creating outcome fairness by eliminating barriers that have prevented the full participation of historically and currently oppressed groups.

Historical trauma means the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding of an individual or generation caused by traumatic experiences or events; any group of people that experience a trauma can incur historical trauma - for example genocide, enslavement, or ethnic cleansing.

Human Resources or HR means the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) Division of Human Resources.

Inclusion means intentionally designed, active, and ongoing engagement with people that ensures opportunities and pathways for participation in all aspects of group, organization, or community, including decision-making processes. Inclusion is not a natural consequence of diversity. There must be intentional and consistent efforts to create and sustain a participative environment. Inclusion refers to how groups show that people are valued as respected members of the group, team, organization, or community. We create inclusion through progressive, consistent actions to expand, include, and share.

Microaggressions mean everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

Oppression means systemic devaluing, undermining, marginalizing, and disadvantaging of certain social identities in contrast to the privileged norm; when some people deny others something of value, while others have ready access. This can occur, intentionally and unintentionally, on individual, institutional, and cultural levels.

Overburdened (communities) Minority, low-income, tribal, or indigenous populations or geographic locations in the United States that often experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks. This disproportionality can be the result of greater vulnerability to environmental hazards, lack of opportunity for public participation, or other factors. Increased vulnerability may be attributable to an accumulation of negative or lack of positive environmental, health, economic, or social conditions within these populations or places. The term describes situations where multiple factors, including both environmental and socio-economic stressors, may act cumulatively to affect health and the environment and contribute to persistent environmental health disparities.

Privilege means any unearned benefit, position, power, right, or advantage one receives in society because of their identity, be it acknowledged or unacknowledged.

Racism means a way of representing or describing race or any action taken that creates or reproduces structures of domination based on racial categories, in other words, racism is racial prejudice plus power.

Underserved Communities refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of "equity." ([USDA, NRCS](#))

White fragility White fragility refers to the discomfort white people may experience in reaction to discussions about racism in which even a minimum amount of racial stress is deemed intolerable.

Policy Statement

SCC recognizes that in order to achieve our mission and vision in service of those who reside in Washington, we must lead with the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of our work.

The state of Washington is diverse, and SCC must reflect that diversity. When we are representative of the people we serve, we can better address the disparities in outcomes of our services for marginalized, underrepresented, underserved, and overburdened communities through purposeful, tailored, and equitable use of resources and programs.

SCC recognizes that although we cannot change the oppressive and discriminatory practices of the past, we have control over the workplace culture we create daily. As an agency and as individuals, we will accept our responsibility and seize every opportunity to dismantle statewide, administrative, and divisional policies, procedures, systems, and practices that perpetuate inequity.

Because of this, it is SCC's expectation that all employees, regardless of position, always treat others with respect and dignity and actively work to create inclusivity and equity, regardless of race, color, nationality, position, gender, age, or any other characteristic, background, or belief.

In keeping with this expectation, every employee should strive to do the following:

- Accept that mistakes will be made, acknowledged, and learned from. Much of this journey will require grace and learning through iterations of growth and failure;
- Recognize your role in creating and perpetuating equity and inclusion through overcoming your own individual biases, whether conscious or unconscious and be willing to walk the journey toward self-awareness and reflection;
- Co-create with your colleagues a welcoming, supportive, safe, affirming, and respectful work environment;
- Engage and support respectful dialogue and courageous conversations even when uncomfortable about racism, privilege, white fragility, dominant culture, oppression, and historical trauma;
- Participate in continuous learning, development, and training offered in the areas of diversity, inclusion, cultural humility, oppression, and equity;
- Identify and address microaggressions as they occur in our workplace, whether intentional or unintentional, and use these as opportunities to educate, learn, grow, listen, and respond with respect;
- Seek to show respect to other's values, beliefs, principles, and lived experiences.

The requirements and goals, developed by the SCC DEI working group, HR, and agency leadership, will be used in annual evaluations for employees as a specific competency required for satisfactory job performance. The agency expects supervisors to ensure all employees are complying, achieving, and exceeding the goals identified in this policy.

Related policy

This policy incorporates by reference other SCC agency policies specifically the following:

- Respectful Workplace Policy;
- Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Policy;
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy; and the
- Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy.

Failure to follow policy

The requirements of this policy are mandatory. By education of employees and through the expectations of this policy, SCC will actively seek to prevent, correct, and discipline behavior that violates this policy.

Employees violating this policy may be subject to disciplinary action under [chapter 357-40 WAC Discipline](#) and/or the provisions of applicable [collective bargaining agreement\(s\)](#). See the agency's discipline policy.

- SCC is committed to responding to complaints,
- SCC will take appropriate and swift action to address any violation of this policy, and,
- Any employee who initiates or participates in retaliation against individuals making a complaint pursuant to this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal.

Responsibilities

All employees

- Read and comply with this policy.
- Review this policy and complete related training once a year, or as assigned.
- If you are not sure whether you are following this policy, ask your supervisor for advice or support so you can uphold the values described here.

Human Resources in coordination with the DEI work group

- HR will lead and coordinate implementation of this policy together with agency departments and provide support to employees in meeting their responsibilities under this policy. Implementation includes:
 - Develop and implement an annual training program;
 - Develop and put in place measurable objectives;
 - Establish a purposeful, cyclical review process to measure progress.

Supervisors and managers

In recognizing the positional privilege supervisors and leaders hold and their associated responsibility, the agency directs all supervisors and leaders, with coordination and support from human resources, to do the following:

- Promote diversity in all hiring activities including recruiting, interviewing, and selection to attract diverse candidates as managers and leaders, including but not limited, to culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse candidates.
- Develop hiring practices and a hiring toolkit that address implicit biases within job descriptions and interview processes to improve accessibility.
- Actively engage in initiating, promoting, and championing inclusive strategies to retain workforce diversity in race, ethnicity, color, sex, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, veteran status, and disability status;
- Ensure equitable access to growth and leadership development, educational, and training opportunities, succession planning, mentoring opportunities, and other resources. This includes ensuring competitive internal and external recruitments rather than direct appointments where possible.

Executive Leadership Team including Commission members.

With support and coordination from human resources, leadership will do the following:

- Make diversity, equity, and inclusion a continuously-present focus and a core value in our agency decisions, especially as the decisions relate to the allocation of resources;
- Use the voices and perspectives of marginalized and oppressed communities to influence and inform our priorities now and in the future;
- Make SCC an anti-oppression institution with inclusive, full participation in decision-making and a purposeful commitment to restored relationships with marginalized and oppressed communities;
- Support progressive facilities and environment planning to transform the workplace into a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible environment for all staff and customers;
- Actively listen to the experiences of staff, especially those from marginalized groups, and take action to change discriminatory or exclusionary practices;
- Continue to assess and correct workforce inequities throughout the agency including leadership appointments, promotional opportunities, training requests, access to flexible and alternate work modalities, and compensation.
- Support the long term development and improvement of internal and external communications that facilitate accessibility and access to SCC resources and business.

Procedures

Please click here for the [Process for Reporting a Complaint](#), or you may request a paper copy from HR. Written process is also written at the end of this policy.

SCC has put in place a process to make sure protection and relief is available from any form of discrimination or sexual harassment. Protection and relief is available to all State Conservation Commission (SCC) employees, applicants, contractors, and volunteers.

History

First Effective

Amended

DRAFT

Harassment, Discrimination, or Retaliation Complaint Process

We are committed to promoting an inclusive, respectful, and safe culture. Because of this, we will respond to all complaints related to harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. To help make sure this happens, we have put in place a complaint reporting process to make sure protection and relief is available from any form of discrimination or sexual harassment. No complaint is insignificant if it means an employee doesn't feel emotionally or physically safe in the workplace.

About the complaint reporting process

This complaint process supports and is used together with these agency policies:

- Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Policy,
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy,
- Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy,
- Reasonable Accommodation Policy, and the,
- Respectful Workplace Policy.

There are occasions that must inform employees that we are under a legal obligation to respond to allegations of behaviors covered by this policy. We are committed to responding because we want to promote an inclusive, respectful and safe culture.

Who can file a complaint?

Anyone who works, volunteers, interns, or does contracting work for the small agency can report or file a complaint. If you are a represented employee, this process will not conflict with a formal grievance process. Please refer to the [appropriate bargaining agreement](#) regarding complaints and grievances.

Should I submit a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, discontent, or unhappiness with an action, decision, or omission within the control or responsibility of the agency and includes an unresolvable problem or dispute. Use this process if the issue cannot be resolved informally at the supervisor level or falls into one of the categories below, a complaint should be submitted.

Use this process for:

- Unlawful discrimination (racial, sexual orientation, disability, religious, age, etc.)
- Personal harassment (inappropriate comments, offensive jokes, intimidation, ostracizing behavior, etc.)
- Physical harassment (hostile behavior, intimidation by destruction of property, direct threats, etc.)
- Sexual harassment
- Quid pro quo sexual harassment
- Third-party harassment (an individual outside of the organization)

- Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Retaliation

We encourage everyone to raise issues that are of concern as soon as possible. We follow a transparent, fair, and timely process for addressing complaints and problems so that:

- Everyone involved is treated equitably.
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How do I submit a complaint?

Complaints may be made in writing or verbally. Depending on the situation and your level of comfort, you can report the issue directly to your supervisor for resolution or schedule a conversation with your [assigned HR Business Partner \(HRBP\)](#).

We encourage you to use the [Personnel Incident form](#) when making a written complaint. If you choose to submit a complaint form to a trusted supervisor, manager, member of the leadership team, or to your HRBP, follow the directions on the form.

What happens once HR receives my complaint?

The assigned HRBP will review your complaint to determine next steps based on the issue described in the complaint. In all situations, we will make sure you are kept informed of the status of your complaint. Depending on the situation, you may be asked to provide additional supporting information for your complaint – requests for more information, if needed, may come in a variety of forms.



Washington State Conservation Commission

Policy Name and #	Discipline Policy Policy# 23-xx
Applies to:	All employees (staff members) of the Washington State Conservation Commission excluding the Executive Director.
Effective Date:	Month XX, 2023
Approved By:	

Applies to:

This policy applies to all Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) employees. Exempt at-will employees are excluded from civil service rules.

Governance: Listed below are some, but not all, applicable governing requirements. Note: Laws and rules may change over time and such changes may take precedence over this policy.

- State law – [Chapter 41.06 RCW State civil service law](#)
- State rule – [Chapter 357-40 WAC Discipline](#)
- State rule – [Chapter 357-58 WAC Washington Management Service](#)

Reason for Policy

This policy identifies the disciplinary process at the State Conservation Commission (SCC).

Definitions

Non-exempt Employee means non-exempt (represented or non-represented) means an employee who is covered under collective bargaining agreements (CBA) and/or Washington Administrative Code (WAC).

Exempt Employee means exempt from civil service rules.

Policy

To ensure the State Conservation Commission is in compliance with the state requirement set forth in WACs, RCWs, and Executive Orders, as well as enhance supervisor's knowledge in these areas, the agency will periodically arrange to offer required training classes for SCC management staff only.

- A. The Executive Director, as the appointing authority may take the following disciplinary actions for just cause:
1. Oral and written reprimands;
 2. Suspension without pay;
 3. Reduction in the employee's base salary
 4. Demotion; and,
 5. Dismissal.
- B. The requirements when taking disciplinary action include the following.
1. Oral and written reprimands:
 - a) Reprimands may be delegated to managers and supervisors in the employee's chain of command.
 - b) Delivered reprimands must be identified as reprimands when given to the employee.
 - c) The manager is not required to inform the employee of the pending action prior to delivering the reprimand to the employee.
 2. Suspension
 - a) Prior to imposing the suspension, the appointing authority must inform the employee, in writing, of the reasons for the proposed disciplinary action and an explanation of the evidence.
 - b) The appointing authority will schedule a meeting to provide the employee an opportunity to respond. The employee may respond in writing if they prefer.
 - c) A pre-disciplinary meeting with the appointing authority is considered time worked.
 - d) The written suspension notice must include:
 - The specific charge(s)
 - The duration of the suspension
 - The employee's right to appeal to the Personnel Resources Board under WAC 357-52.
 - e) A permanent employee may not be suspended without pay for more than 15 calendar days as a single penalty, or more than 30 calendar days in any one calendar year as an accumulation of multiple penalties.
 3. Reduction in base salary
 - a) Prior to imposing the reduction in base salary, the appointing authority must inform the employee, in writing, of the reasons for the proposed disciplinary action and an explanation of the evidence.
 - The appointing authority will schedule a meeting to provide the employee an opportunity to respond. The employee may respond in writing if he or she prefers.

- A pre-disciplinary meeting with the appointing authority is considered time worked.
- b) The appointing authority must provide written notice to the employee at least fifteen (15) calendar days before the effective date of the reduction in base salary.
- c) The written notice must include the specific charge(s) and the employee's right to appeal to the Personnel Resources Board.

4. Demotion

- a) Prior to imposing the demotion, the appointing authority must inform the employee, in writing, of the reasons for the proposed disciplinary action and an explanation of the evidence.
 - The appointing authority will schedule a meeting to provide the employee an opportunity to respond. The employee may respond in writing if he or she prefers.
 - A pre-disciplinary meeting with the appointing authority is considered time worked.
- b) The appointing authority must provide written notice to the employee at least 15 calendar days before the effective date of the demotion.
- c) The notice must include the specific charge(s) and the employee's right to appeal to the Personnel Resources Board.

5. Dismissal

- a) Prior to imposing the dismissal, the appointing authority must inform the employee, in writing, of the reasons for the proposed disciplinary action and an explanation of the evidence.
 - The appointing authority will schedule a meeting to provide the employee an opportunity to respond. The employee may respond in writing if he or she prefers.
 - A pre-disciplinary meeting with the appointing authority is considered time worked.
- b) The appointing authority may dismiss an employee with 15 calendar days' written notice or without 15 calendar days' notice as follows:
 - An employee may be dismissed effective immediately with pay in lieu of the 15 calendar days' notice period. Written notice of the specific charge(s) and the employee's rights to appeal are required.
 - An employee may be dismissed effective immediately without pay in lieu of the 15 calendar days' notice period if the appointing authority determines the employee's continued employment jeopardizes the good of the organization. The employee must receive written notice of the immediate dismissal stating the reason(s) for dismissal, the reasons immediate action is necessary, and the employee's right to appeal.

6. Notification Requirements.

The following include the notification requirements needed with disciplinary actions.

- Notice of suspension, reduction in base salary, demotion, or dismissal must be provided by personal service or certified letter through the United States mail.
 - The notice will be regarded as served when personal delivery has been accomplished; or upon deposit of a certified letter in the United States mail properly stamped and addressed to the employee's last known home address.
7. Exempt employees who are under the appointing authority of the executive director shall be notified of concerns prior to dismissal unless egregious to warrant immediate termination or determined appropriate by the appointing authority.
8. Temporary Alternate/Home Assignment.

An employee may be placed on alternate or home assignment during the course of an investigation for legitimate business reasons. The employee may receive verbal notice of the home assignment. The employee must receive written confirmation of the home assignment within five working days of the home assignment.

History

First Effective: Month/xx/2023

Amended:

Harassment, Discrimination, or Retaliation Complaint Process

We are committed to promoting an inclusive, respectful, and safe culture. Because of this, we will respond to all complaints related to harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. To help make sure this happens, we have put in place a complaint reporting process to make sure protection and relief is available from any form of discrimination or sexual harassment. No complaint is insignificant if it means an employee doesn't feel emotionally or physically safe in the workplace.

About the complaint reporting process

This complaint process supports and is used together with these agency policies:

- Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Policy,
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There are occasions that must inform employees that we are under a legal obligation to respond to allegations of behaviors covered by this policy. We are committed to responding because we want to promote an inclusive, respectful, and safe culture.

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- Physical harassment (hostile behavior, intimidation by destruction of property, direct threats, etc.)
- Sexual harassment
- Quid pro quo sexual harassment
- Third-party harassment (an individual outside of the organization)
- Bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Retaliation

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Washington State Conservation Commission

March 16, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: Professional Engineering Grants Programmatic Guidelines

Action Item

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Informational Item

☐

Summary:

For several biennia, the SCC has offered professional engineering grants to groups of cooperating conservation districts (areas) to help support access to professional engineering services for conservation district projects, either through hire of professional engineers or contracting for engineering services. General requirements for these grants have been included as a section of the Grants and Contracts Procedure Manual in the past. To be consistent with how we are implementing other SCC grants programs and with the additional investment of funds from the legislature for conservation district engineering needs, crafting a more comprehensive set of grant guidelines for this program became a higher priority. Regional managers formed a committee of conservation district representatives and worked with the committee and other SCC staff to craft the attached draft guidelines. SCC staff are requesting that the Commissioners approve sending the draft Professional Engineering Grant Guidelines out to conservation districts for a review and comment period. It is anticipated that a final set of grant guidelines will be presented to the Commissioners in May for adoption.

Requested Action (if action item):

Commissioners approve sending the draft Professional Engineering Grant Guidelines out to conservation districts for a review and comment period.

Staff Contact:

Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator, sjoy@scc.wa.gov

Background and Discussion:

For more than twenty years the Conservation Commission has provided professional engineering grants to conservation districts to help them access professional engineering services and meet requirements set out in the Engineers and Land Surveyors Act (RCW 18.43). Grant requirements for these funds have been historically included as a section of the Grants and Contracts Procedure Manual published by the SCC. Over time, situations and questions have arisen that would be best clarified in a more comprehensive set of Professional Engineering Grant Guidelines. With the increased investment in conservation district engineering work by the legislature in the 2022 legislation session, crafting more comprehensive grant guidelines became a higher priority.

Regional managers have worked with a group of conservation district representatives including professional engineers, districts employing engineers, and professional engineering grant recipients to identify where these grants have been working well and areas to further clarify in grant guidelines. That group of CD representatives has offered valuable input and feedback into the draft guidelines that are attached here. Following a review and comment period for all conservation districts, it is anticipated that a final version of these grant guidelines will be presented in May for final review and adoption.

Professional Engineering Grants Programmatic Guidelines

Draft March 2023

Program Background

Professional Engineering Grant (PE) funds are operating funds. RCW 89.08.220(12) provides authority for conservation districts to share the services of professional engineering staff. PEs provide funding support to groups of cooperating conservation districts to hire or retain the services of professional engineers or engineering technicians under the supervision of a licensed professional engineer. The SCC provides PE funding to support professional engineering services and oversight, technical assistance, and staff training for conservation districts. Professional engineering programs are utilized to pool resources to access engineering services that:

- Are experienced with conservation projects' engineering requirements,
- Are familiar with local conservation districts operation and programs
- Are readily available to assist conservation district staff with all phases of conservation projects from initial project scoping, budgeting/grant development, permitting, construction, and final inspection and reporting.

Program Rules

Eligibility to Receive Funds

Conservation districts must meet all of the Accountability requirements under the [Conservation Accountability and Performance Program](#) (CAPP) in order to be eligible to receive PE funds.

Timeline & Application for Funding

Professional Engineering Grant funds are allocated to conservation districts at the beginning of each fiscal year, no later than the month of July. Nearby districts are encouraged to work together cooperatively to hire or retain and share the services of licensed professional engineers.

Funds will be allocated to conservation districts based on complete applications submitted utilizing the [grant addendum form](#). Applications will be reviewed by Regional Managers and SCC financial staff for complete information and adherence to program guidelines before funds will be awarded. Funds will be allocated as follows:

- Allocate a set, equal amount per fiscal year to each cooperating engineering area, of an amount to be set at the start of each fiscal year of no less than \$150,000 per fiscal year.
- Provide opportunity for additional engineering funds to be requested either for a cooperating engineering area or for individual conservation districts needing additional funds for engineering work.

Specific Program Requirements

Professional Engineers

Districts may hire licensed professional engineering staff or engineers in training (EIT) if they are supervised by a licensed professional engineer or contract out for engineering services as needed. A professional engineer is defined by RCW 18.43.020(10)¹. Professional engineers and EITs shall be licensed in the State of Washington. Districts are encouraged to build engineering capacity that includes one or more EITs to support professional engineering staff.

Inter-Local Agreements (ILA)

Each cooperating engineering area of conservation districts must enter into an inter-local agreement governing: formation, membership, meeting frequency, and procedures of an area engineering committee (AEC), hire/fire and performance evaluation procedures for professional engineering staff, project/work prioritization methodology, general terms governing termination or amendment of the agreement, dispute resolution, liability, and insurance. A current, fully signed ILA for each cooperating engineering area must be on file at the SCC. If an ILA is in force until such time as terminated the document does not have to be re-signed by each cooperating conservation district each biennium. An email must be submitted to the sccgrants@scc.wa.gov at the start of each biennium indicating that review of the ILA has occurred, with the current ILA attached, and verifying the ILA is still current. Each district should review the agreement on an annual basis and ensure they are familiar with the terms and procedures contained in it.

Liability for Professional Engineers

In general, a conservation district as an employer is liable for their employees, including professional engineers if the employee is acting on behalf of the conservation district. In the event of a workplace injury, worker's compensation insurance through WA Labor & Industries applies. Additionally, the professional license that is held by professional engineers provides a measure of protection for liability if the engineer is working within the scope of that license. If the conservation district employing the professional engineer wishes to transfer liability to another district in which the engineer is performing work this should be addressed in the ILA that governs sharing that engineer's services.

Changing the Host District

In the event a cooperating engineering area changes the designated host district, all equipment purchased with Commission funds (including purchases with overhead funds) must be transferred to the new host district. An inventory of such equipment shall be maintained and shared with the AEC annually or as prescribed by the ILA. All unexpended PE funds must be transferred to the new host district to continue to support the program. If the employment of professional engineering staff is transferred to a new host district, accrued sick/vacation leave and restricted host district funds accrued to cover the liability of this leave shall be transferred to the new host district. Host districts may only change at the start of a fiscal year and the SCC must be notified and approve of the change before processing any PE vouchers for the cooperating engineering area.

Expenditures

Eligible expenditures for PE funding include:

- Salary and benefits

- Overhead
- Goods and services
 - Such as contracted professional engineering, surveying, or geotechnical services
 - Software, hardware (computers etc..), and other equipment essential to performing engineering work
- Travel
- Training
- Vehicles (conditionally eligible on a case-by-case basis)

Ineligible expenditures for reimbursement from PE funding:

- General administrative goods and services (office rent, copy machines, electricity etc....)
- Education and outreach
- BMP implementation/construction/installation

Equipment

Equipment purchases anticipated to cost more than \$1,500 including but not limited to software, hardware (e.g., computer/laptop/tablet), essential tools (e.g., survey equipment) or vehicles should be included in the PE grant application as a separate outcome at the beginning of the grant cycle, where possible. Vehicles may only be requested on a limited basis utilizing the WSCC Vehicle Purchase Request Form. Once a PE grant is awarded, those software, hardware or equipment purchases included in the grant application are considered pre-approved and may move forward anytime during the fiscal year. All such purchases must be received in hand prior to June 30th of each fiscal year. Also, each applicable AEC must be informed of and approve of all such purchases over \$1,000 and this information must be included in the grant addendum form. If an equipment purchase over \$1,500 becomes necessary and was not included in the original grant addendum and award, pre-approval must be secured from SCC prior to making the purchase.

Reporting

Each conservation district receiving PE funds (either an individual district or a cooperating engineering area of districts) will submit a report of work accomplishments for the engineering program at the end of each fiscal year in a format to be provided by the SCC.

General Requirements (see also [Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedures Manual](#))

- An overhead percentage only is allowed to be billed based on actual district staff hours worked. The maximum overhead percentage allowed is 25%.
- Any district that does not utilize their awarded PE allocation in a timely manner or returns funding late in the fiscal year (April 1st or later each fiscal year) without a compelling explanation, may receive a reduced allocation or be deemed ineligible to receive future PE funding allocations.
- Please submit an [Operating Grants Returned Funds form](#) as soon as it becomes clear that funds will not be utilized.

Vouchering

Monthly grant vouchers are required. Refer to the [Grants and Contracts Policy and](#)

[Procedures Manual](#) for further, detailed vouchering requirements and forms.

Definitions

- “Engineered” practice or engineering required practice: NRCS or SCC practices designated as requiring engineering oversight.
- Cooperating engineering area: a designated geographic area with several conservation districts that partner to pool financial resources to support an engineering program.
- Host district: one district within each cooperating engineering area acts as the designated PE administrator or “host”. Typically, this district is also the employer of professional engineering staff.



Washington State Conservation Commission

March 16, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: Natural Resource Investments Programmatic Guidelines Revisions

Action Item

X

Informational Item

Summary:

Prior to the beginning of each biennium, SCC staff have an opportunity to review current grant programmatic guidelines and work with conservation districts to make revisions to improve them. The Natural Resource Investments (NRI) guidelines were significantly updated prior to the 21-23 biennium but a few minor clarifications to the current language are recommended at this time. SCC staff are requesting that the Commissioners approve sending the draft revised NRI guidelines out to conservation districts for a review and comment period. It is anticipated that a final set of revised guidelines would be presented to the Commissioners in May for adoption.

Requested Action (if action item):

Commissioners approve sending out the draft revised NRI guidelines to conservation districts for a review and comment period.

Staff Contact:

Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator, sjoy@scc.wa.gov

Background and Discussion:

The NRI programmatic guidelines underwent review and updates working with a committee including conservation district representatives in fall of 2020 and spring of 2021 with updated guidelines adopted by Commissioners in May of 2021. The updated guidelines included a new project type called District Implemented Projects (DIP). As we have been road-testing the DIP option in the 21-23 biennium, some clarifications that could improve the NRI guidelines came to light. Those suggested revisions are shown in the attached revised guidelines. A clean copy is also attached for reference.



Natural Resource Investments Programmatic Guidelines

Program Background

Natural Resource Investments (NRI) funds are capital funds appropriated to the State Conservation Commission for conservation districts to complete projects with landowners to address natural resource concerns for the enhancement and protection of renewable natural resources. A budget proviso may be added to an appropriation as part of the legislative budgeting process. Currently no budget provisos restricting the projects that may be completed with this funding are attached to this appropriation.

Program Rules

Eligibility to Receive Funds

Conservation districts must meet all of the Accountability requirements under the [Conservation Accountability and Performance Program](#) (CAPP) in order to be eligible to receive NRI funds.

Timeline & Application for Funding

Natural Resource Investments funds are allocated to conservation districts at the beginning of each biennium, in the month of July. Funds will be allocated to districts based on complete applications submitted utilizing the [grant addendum form](#). Each district will be eligible to receive an equal share of available NRI funds based on legislative appropriation levels each biennium. Applications will be reviewed by Regional Managers and SCC financial staff for complete information and adherence to program guidelines before funds will be awarded. A district's potential allocation of NRI funds will be held for 90 days at the start of each biennium. At the end of 90 days, the district may forfeit the funding allocation if they are not working in good faith with their Regional Manager to develop projects to properly utilize the funds, or simply cannot utilize their full allocation due to a lack of eligible projects.

Throughout each biennium, after the NRI funds have been allocated for that biennium, each district is expected to enter future project needs for NRI funding into CPDS to build future requests for funding.

Throughout each biennium, Regional Managers will interact with each conservation district with allocated NRI funding to ascertain project progress. Work must be initiated, regardless of project type, within 120 days of funding award to the district. At the end of 120 days if progress has not been demonstrated, the district may forfeit the funding allocation.

To amend an NRI grant to add or remove projects after the initial grant award, districts must work with their Regional Manager. Formal notice of a grant amendment must be received from SCC fiscal staff prior to beginning work or incurring expenditures on the new/amended a-project.

If funds are returned to the SCC or additional funding otherwise becomes available, a subsequent application round may be conducted. If that occurs, funding will be distributed either through a competitive process or distributed equally among the eligible districts. The amount of funding available will determine the method used. If a competitive process, ranking criteria will be established and published in the funding availability announcement. At least a 60 day solicitation period for applications would be conducted. Every effort will be made to utilize existing forms, such as the ~~grant addendum~~ NRI supplemental funding request form to act as an application for this process.

Technical Assistance

A maximum of 25% of the total funding award of NRI funds may be used for technical assistance activities such as planning, project design, engineering, permitting, project implementation oversight, project management and administration, travel, and reporting. Total award amount x 25% = allowable amount for technical assistance.

General Requirements

- All funded cost-share and completed District Implemented Projects and practices must be entered in the CPDS.
- All projects and practices must have a detailed description. See example descriptions below.
- Maximum cost-share per landowner per fiscal year is ~~\$50~~100,000 per 13-25 Category 3 Policy, May 16, 2013. ~~The Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedures Manual.~~
- ~~The maximum cost share rate allowable for publicly owned lands is 50% per 13-05 Cost Share Assistance Policy, March 21, 2013.~~
- 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. ~~the Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedures Manual.~~
- An overhead percentage only is allowed to be billed based on actual hours worked.
- Ineligible costs for NRI funding:
 - Administrative goods and services (office rent, copy machines, telephones etc....)
 - Education and outreach
- Equipment
 - Equipment is eligible for reimbursement under a cost-share project structure only, only if it is directly essential for implementation of a conservation/farm plan, and the equipment must become an asset tied to the property/farm and used only for proper implementation of the BMP.
- All projects must meet requirements for use of NRI capital funding. **Capital projects must have a practice design life of greater than one year.** Refer to practice list available [here](#). For example, management practices such as cover crop or reduced tillage are not eligible for NRI capital funding. Capital funding may only be used for structural-type practices.
 - Select practices with a design life of one year or less may be eligible for NRI funds as long as the practice is completed in conjunction with, and in support of, a structural practice. For example, tree/shrub site preparation, mulching, or spoil spreading are potentially eligible if completed in conjunction with a riparian buffer planting. Please work with your Regional Manager if you have any questions at all about eligibility of a practice for NRI funds before you begin any work.

- Work must be underway on all awarded NRI projects within 120 days of the funding allocation. This could be technical assistance effort or actual construction.
- Any district that does not utilize their awarded NRI allocation in a timely manner or returns funding late in the biennium without a compelling explanation, may receive a reduced allocation or be deemed ineligible to receive future NRI funding allocations.
- Districts may work together and pool their available NRI funding for larger or joint projects, or transfer available NRI funds to another district, upon consultation with the Regional Manager and with an inter-agency agreement in place.
- All project and practices must be completed in the funding time frame. The funding is granted on a biennium basis (for example: July 1, 2024³ - June 30, 2025⁵) 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.
- Please submit a Natural Resource Investments Capital Grants Returned Funds form as soon as it becomes clear that funds will not be utilized.

CPDS Requirements

- All funded cost-share and completed DIP's and practices must be entered into the CPDS
 - Input the amount of NRI funding utilized for the practice.
 - Input other funding sources also being utilized for the practice such as landowner contribution or another grant.
- 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.
- Completion date is required for each practice completed with NRI funding.

Vouchering

Monthly grant vouchers are required. Technical assistance and expenditures incurred by districts to implement or construct a DIP must be vouchered for on a monthly basis. Cost share projects are vouchered upon BMP completion. ~~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.
- The [GEO 21-02 Complied Statement](#) form must be submitted when requesting cost share or district implemented project reimbursement.

Refer to the [Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual](#) for further, detailed vouchering, ~~and~~ cost share, ~~and~~ DIP rules.

Cultural Resources

- All practices must comply with the SCC cultural resources policy. A cultural resources review should begin 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. Cultural resources review is required by the Governor's Executive Order 21-02 for all projects using both state operating and capital funding provided by SCC.
 - Please refer to the [SCC cultural resources policy and procedures](#).
- Cultural resource costs are awarded on a case by case basis. Funding will be added in to a separate grant outcome as each award occurs.

Eligible Project Types

NRI funds may be implemented in two different project types. A project may not be changed from one eligible project type to another once work has been done or expenditures have occurred. The following are the eligible project types and associated parameters of each type:

Landowner Implemented Cost-Share Projects

- All landowner information and proposed practices must be entered completely into the Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS).
- All cost-share practices must be identified under the funding tab as utilizing "Natural Resource Investments" funding.
- The ~~cost-share contract~~ [Contract for Cost Share](#) must be generated from CPDS and utilized for this type of project. The ~~cost-share agreement~~ terms [in the Contract for Cost Share](#) must not be modified.
- Multi-landowner cost-share projects are allowed. A multi-landowner cost-share project is one in which the same or similar BMP(s) are installed on several landowner's properties. [A Contract for Cost Share is required for each landowner.](#)

District Implemented Projects

A district implemented project (DIP) is a project where the district is the lead planner and implementer. An example of a DIP could be implementing an identified practice with multiple landowners at the same time – reducing vegetative fuels throughout a neighborhood or installing riparian buffers on several consecutive properties along a creek. Another example of a district implemented project could be performing one aspect of a much larger project such as acquiring large woody debris for a stream restoration project or constructing or installing one component or practice of a multi-practice project. In this

project type, the District is taking full responsibility for installation/construction of the project which may include, but is not limited to: acquiring permits, bidding and purchasing processes, and prevailing wage requirements. Districts may sub-contract construction/implementation of a DIP to a private contractor, another district, or a partner agency or organization. A copy of a contract or inter-agency agreement for this arrangement should be included with vouchering.

- A district implemented project must not include cost-sharing, cash reimbursement, to a landowner(s) with NRI or other SCC funds. The District is assuming all responsibility for project planning and construction directly.
- All project information and completed practices must be entered completely into the Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS). Currently, Each individual landowner must be entered into CPDS. Districts should account for and budget for additional time to ensure this gets done.
- A Landowner Agreement is required for any projects completed on non-district owned property and a fully signed (signed and dated by landowner and district) copy must be provided to the SCC at the time of vouchering. The WSCC provides a Landowner Agreement template for district use, if desired. A District may also use their own version of a Landowner Agreement. A copy of this agreement must be provided when vouchering.
- There is no match or cost-share scenario requirement for these projects. However, other sources of contributing funds toward the project should be reported.
- See District Implemented Project Decision Tree in Attachment A for assistance with determining if a cost-share or DIP approach is best for your project or contact your Regional Manager.

Recommendations

- Districts are encouraged to group landowners and practices together.
 - This unique targeted approach of clustering practices with multiple landowners in one geographic area allows for more effective and efficient use of capital funding targeting focused geographic areas for measurable resource improvement.
- Districts are encouraged to prioritize projects implemented in areas with identified pollution inputs with particular focus on areas with 303(d) listings, projects implementing an Ecology TMDL implementation plan, projects addressing habitat for Chinook salmon, and projects implementing a local resource plan.
- Districts are encouraged to prioritize projects connected to the conservation district's annual or long-range plan.

Definitions

This is the verbatim definition of a capital project per the Office of Financial Management's budget instructions. The SCC may work within this definition as well as restrictions that may exist for our

specific sources of capital funding and any legislative budget provisos.

- **Capital Project:** 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.¹ Projects are typically on-the-ground projects and technical assistance activities limited to those that support projects or will lead to capital funded projects.

- **Practice:** Approved practice per current NRCS BMP Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). Or Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) approved practices or Licensed Engineer approved practices.

Detailed Practice Descriptions

Completed Cost-Share Project or Practice (Example)

The landowners want to address water quality concerns with the implementation of a more effective manure management program. At the present time, the farm has 22 beef cattle spring and summer grazing on approximately 100 acres of pasture located on the east side of the Northfork. During the late fall, winter and early spring months, the livestock will be fed hay from the barn. As manure accumulates during the rainy months when the manure cannot be spread on the fields, it will have the potential to contaminate surface and groundwater resources. To address the problem, the landowners would like to construct a waste composting facility. Implementation of this practice will improve and protect water quality by providing a means of storing and composting manure which has the potential to contaminate surface and groundwater resources. In addition, it will provide the farming operation with a high value organic soil amendment for use on the crop, pasture and hay fields.

The Skokomish River has a history of having problems with fecal coliform contamination that sometimes results in shellfish closures in the Hood Canal. This project will help reduce the risk of shellfish contamination by eliminating a potentially substantial source of fecal coliform to the system.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we need to describe the practice(s) with so much detail?

- **Answer:** The Commission will need to write a detailed, narrative report for the Legislature and other interested entities on how this funding was spent and what was the benefit to natural resources, nutrient and pathogen pollution and any other resource concern. The Commission will also need to explain how these funded projects

¹ Office of Financial Management Budget Division 2015-25 Capital Budget Instructions June 2014, OFM
Discussion Board Commission Meeting

measurably improve habitat for Chinook salmon, water quality, 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, or what water bodies or habitat were improved. The number of new BMPs installed and what benefit did they bring to the problem of a local county partnership, Ecology's 303(d) listed water bodies or a county or local issue.

If you were to read the examples above, which one would you be able to “tell the best story with?”

Why do we need to enter into CPDS all of our completed practices regardless of whether or not it was a cost-share or district implemented project?

- **Answer:** The Commission utilizes CPDS to compile metrics on accomplishments for our capital funded programs including NRI funds. We must be able to efficiently report out to the legislature and others what the public investment of funds is buying. CPDS is our current method of collecting this information from conservation districts.

Do the SCC cost-share policies apply to a district implemented project?

- **Answer:** A District Implemented Project is not a cost-share project so the SCC policies that apply to cost-share specifically do not apply to a district implemented project. However the practices being implemented still fall under SCC's “cost share” type activities and are still subject to implementation monitoring, complete CPDS record entry, Debarment & Suspension, Cultural Resources and other general requirements. Refer to the DIP section of the Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedure Manual for more details.



Natural Resource Investments Programmatic Guidelines

Draft – Revised March 2023

Program Background

Natural Resource Investments (NRI) funds are capital funds appropriated to the State Conservation Commission for conservation districts to complete projects with landowners to address natural resource concerns for the enhancement and protection of renewable natural resources. A budget proviso may be added to an appropriation as part of the legislative budgeting process. Currently no budget provisos restricting the projects that may be completed with this funding are attached to this appropriation.

Program Rules

Eligibility to Receive Funds

Conservation districts must meet all of the Accountability requirements under the [Conservation Accountability and Performance Program](#) (CAPP) in order to be eligible to receive NRI funds.

Timeline & Application for Funding

Natural Resource Investments funds are allocated to conservation districts at the beginning of each biennium, in the month of July. Funds will be allocated to districts based on complete applications submitted utilizing the [grant addendum form](#). Each district will be eligible to receive an equal share of available NRI funds based on legislative appropriation levels each biennium. Applications will be reviewed by Regional Managers and SCC financial staff for complete information and adherence to program guidelines before funds will be awarded. A district's potential allocation of NRI funds will be held for 90 days at the start of each biennium. At the end of 90 days, the district may forfeit the funding allocation if they are not working in good faith with their Regional Manager to develop projects to properly utilize the funds, or simply cannot utilize their full allocation due to a lack of eligible projects.

Throughout each biennium, after the NRI funds have been allocated for that biennium, each district is expected to enter future project needs for NRI funding into CPDS to build future requests for funding.

Throughout each biennium, Regional Managers will interact with each conservation district with allocated NRI funding to ascertain project progress. Work must be initiated, regardless of project type, within 120 days of funding award to the district. At the end of 120 days if progress has not been demonstrated, the district may forfeit the funding allocation.

To amend an NRI grant to add or remove projects after the initial grant award, districts must work with their Regional Manager. Formal notice of a grant amendment must be received from SCC fiscal staff prior to beginning work or incurring expenditures on the new/amended project.

If funds are returned to the SCC or additional funding otherwise becomes available, a subsequent application round may be conducted. If that occurs, funding will be distributed either through a competitive process or distributed equally among the eligible districts. The amount of funding available will determine the method used. If a competitive process, ranking criteria will be established and published in the funding availability announcement. At least a 60 day solicitation period for applications would be conducted. Every effort will be made to utilize existing forms, such as the NRI supplemental funding request form to act as an application for this process.

Technical Assistance

A maximum of 25% of the total funding award of NRI funds may be used for technical assistance activities such as planning, project design, engineering, permitting, project implementation oversight, project management and administration, travel, and reporting. Total award amount x 25% = allowable amount for technical assistance.

General Requirements

- All funded cost-share and completed District Implemented Projects and practices must be entered in the CPDS.
- All projects and practices must have a detailed description. See example descriptions below.
- Maximum cost-share per landowner per fiscal year is **\$100,000** per *The Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedures Manual*.
- 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 *the Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedures Manual*.
- An overhead percentage only is allowed to be billed based on actual hours worked.
- Ineligible costs for NRI funding:
 - Administrative goods and services (office rent, copy machines, telephones etc....)
 - Education and outreach
 - Equipment is eligible for reimbursement under a cost-share project structure only, only if it is directly essential for implementation of a conservation/farm plan, and the equipment must become an asset tied to the property/farm and used only for proper implementation of the BMP.
- All projects must meet requirements for use of NRI capital funding. **Capital projects must have a practice design life of greater than one year.** Refer to practice list available [here](#). For example, management practices such as cover crop or reduced tillage are not eligible for NRI capital funding. Capital funding may only be used for structural-type practices.
 - Select practices with a design life of one year or less may be eligible for NRI funds as long as the practice is completed in conjunction with, and in support of, a structural practice. For example, tree/shrub site preparation, mulching, or spoil spreading are potentially eligible if completed in conjunction with a riparian buffer planting. Please work with your Regional Manager if you have any questions at all about eligibility of a practice for NRI funds before you begin any work.
- Work must be underway on all awarded NRI projects within 120 days of the funding allocation. This could be technical assistance effort or actual construction.

- Any district that does not utilize their awarded NRI allocation in a timely manner or returns funding late in the biennium without a compelling explanation, may receive a reduced allocation or be deemed ineligible to receive future NRI funding allocations.
- Districts may work together and pool their available NRI funding for larger or joint projects, or transfer available NRI funds to another district, upon consultation with the Regional Manager and with an inter-agency agreement in place.
- All project and practices must be completed in the funding time frame. The funding is granted on a biennium basis (for example: July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2025) 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.
- Please submit a [Capital Grants Returned Funds form](#) as soon as it becomes clear that funds will not be utilized.

CPDS Requirements

- All funded cost-share and completed DIP's and practices must be entered into the CPDS
 - Input the amount of NRI funding utilized for the practice.
 - Input other funding sources also being utilized for the practice such as landowner contribution or another grant.
- 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.
- Completion date is required for each practice completed with NRI funding.

Vouchering

Monthly grant vouchers are required. Technical assistance and expenditures incurred by districts to implement or construct a DIP must be vouchered for on a monthly basis. Cost share projects are vouchered upon BMP completion.

- 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.
- The [GEO 21-02 Complied Statement](#) form must be submitted when requesting cost share or district implemented project reimbursement.

cost share, and DIP rules.

Cultural Resources

- All practices must comply with the SCC cultural resources policy. A cultural resources review should begin 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. Cultural resources review is required by the Governor's Executive Order 21-02 for all projects using both state operating and capital funding provided by SCC.
 - Please refer to the [SCC cultural resources policy and procedures](#).
- Cultural resource costs are awarded on a case by case basis. Funding will be added in to a separate grant outcome as each award occurs.

Eligible Project Types

NRI funds may be implemented in two different project types. A project may not be changed from one eligible project type to another once work has been done or expenditures have occurred. The following are the eligible project types and associated parameters of each type:

Landowner Implemented Cost-Share Projects

- All landowner information and proposed practices must be entered completely into the Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS).
- All cost-share practices must be identified under the funding tab as utilizing "Natural Resource Investments" funding.
- The Contract for Cost Share must be generated from CPDS and utilized for this type of project. The terms in the Contract for Cost Share must not be modified.
- Multi-landowner cost-share projects are allowed. A multi-landowner cost-share project is one in which the same or similar BMP(s) are installed on several landowner's properties. A Contract for Cost Share is required for each landowner.

District Implemented Projects

A district implemented project (DIP) is a project where the district is the lead planner and implementer. An example of a DIP could be implementing an identified practice with multiple landowners at the same time – reducing vegetative fuels throughout a neighborhood or installing riparian buffers on several consecutive properties along a creek. Another example of a district implemented project could be performing one aspect of a much larger project such as acquiring large woody debris for a stream restoration project or constructing or installing one component or practice of a multi-practice project. In this project type, the District is taking full responsibility for installation/construction of the project which may include, but is not limited to: acquiring permits, bidding and purchasing processes, and prevailing wage requirements. Districts may sub-contract construction/implementation of a DIP to a private contractor, another district, or a partner agency or organization. A copy of a contract or inter-agency agreement for this

arrangement should be included with vouchering.

- A district implemented project must not include cost-sharing, cash reimbursement, to a landowner(s) with NRI or other SCC funds. The District is assuming all responsibility for project planning and construction directly.
- All project information and completed practices must be entered completely into the Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS). Each individual landowner must be entered into CPDS. Districts should account for and budget for additional time to ensure this gets done.
- A Landowner Agreement is required for any projects completed on non-district owned property and a fully signed (signed and dated by landowner and district) copy must be provided to the SCC at the time of vouchering. The WSCC provides a [Landowner Agreement template](#) for district use, if desired. A District may also use their own version of a Landowner Agreement. A copy of this agreement must be provided when vouchering.
- There is no match or cost-share scenario requirement for these projects. However, other sources of contributing funds toward the project should be reported.
- See [District Implemented Project Decision Tree in Attachment A](#) for assistance with determining if a cost-share or DIP approach is best for your project or contact your Regional Manager.

Recommendations

- Districts are encouraged to group landowners and practices together.
 - This unique targeted approach of clustering practices with multiple landowners in one geographic area allows for more effective and efficient use of capital funding targeting focused geographic areas for measurable resource improvement.
- Districts are encouraged to prioritize projects implemented in areas with identified pollution inputs with particular focus on areas with 303(d) listings, projects implementing an Ecology TMDL implementation plan, projects addressing habitat for Chinook salmon, and projects implementing a local resource plan.
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Definitions

This is the verbatim definition of a capital project per the Office of Financial Management's budget instructions. The SCC must work within this definition as well as restrictions that may exist for our specific sources of capital funding and any legislative budget provisos.

- **Capital Project:** 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.¹ Projects are typically on-the-ground projects and technical assistance activities limited to those that support projects or will lead to capital funded projects.

- **Practice:** Approved practice per current NRCS BMP Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). Or Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) approved practices or Licensed Engineer approved practices.

Detailed Practice Descriptions

Completed Cost-Share Project or Practice (Example)

The landowners want to address water quality concerns with the implementation of a more effective manure management program. At the present time, the farm has 22 beef cattle spring and summer grazing on approximately 100 acres of pasture located on the east side of the Northfork. During the late fall, winter and early spring months, the livestock will be fed hay from the barn. As manure accumulates during the rainy months when the manure cannot be spread on the fields, it will have the potential to contaminate surface and groundwater resources. To address the problem, the landowners would like to construct a waste composting facility. Implementation of this practice will improve and protect water quality by providing a means of storing and composting manure which has the potential to contaminate surface and groundwater resources. In addition, it will provide the farming operation with a high value organic soil amendment for use on the crop, pasture and hay fields.

The Skokomish River has a history of having problems with fecal coliform contamination that sometimes results in shellfish closures in the Hood Canal. This project will help reduce the risk of shellfish contamination by eliminating a potentially substantial source of fecal coliform to the system.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we need to describe the practice(s) with so much detail?

- **Answer:** The Commission will need to write a detailed, narrative report for the Legislature and other interested entities on how this funding was spent and what was the benefit to natural resources, nutrient and pathogen pollution and any other resource concern. The Commission will also need to explain how these funded projects measurably improve habitat for Chinook salmon, water quality, 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, or what water bodies or habitat were improved. The number of new BMPs

¹ Office of Financial Management Budget Division 2015-25 Capital Budget Instructions June 2014, OFM

installed and what benefit did they bring to the problem of a local county partnership, Ecology's 303(d) listed water bodies or a county or local issue.

If you were to read the examples above, which one would you be able to “tell the best story with?”

Why do we need to enter into CPDS all of our completed practices regardless of whether or not it was a cost-share or district implemented project?

- **Answer:** The Commission utilizes CPDS to compile metrics on accomplishments for our capital funded programs including NRI funds. We must be able to efficiently report out to the legislature and others what the public investment of funds is buying. CPDS is our current method of collecting this information from conservation districts.

Do the SCC cost-share policies apply to a district implemented project?

- **Answer:** A District Implemented Project is not a cost-share project so the SCC policies that apply to cost-share specifically do not apply to a district implemented project. However, the practices being implemented still fall under SCC's “cost share” type activities and are still subject to implementation monitoring, complete CPDS record entry, Debarment & Suspension, Cultural Resources and other general requirements. Refer to the DIP section of the [Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedure Manual](#) for more details.



Washington State Conservation Commission

March 16, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting & Budget
Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: Approval of Proposed Changes to Grant and Contract Procedure Manual for review and comment period.

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

Summary:

At the January 2023 meeting I gave an update that this work was close to completion and would be coming back to you at the March meeting to request approval for SCC staff to send the draft manual out to conservation districts for the 45-day comment period.

SCC fiscal staff, Regional Managers, Policy staff and Executive Director Pettit all worked together to further clarify requirements, and address concerns and situations districts have brought to us since our last update in May 2021.

SCC staff have completed a roll up of the major changes, I would like to call a few items to your attention:

SCC staff are proposing sunsetting the following stand-alone policies and to roll them into the Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedure Manual as our financial policy and guidance document:

- 13-05 Cost Share Policy
- 13-25 CD Category 3
- 15-01 Cash Advance Payment Policy

SCC staff are also recommending changes to the previously stand-alone policy 13-05 Cost Share Policy: SCC staff are recommending increasing the cost share limit from \$50,000 per landowner, per fiscal year (regardless of program) to \$100,000 per landowner, per fiscal year (regardless of program)

The bulk of the other changes were clarifying current policies & procedures. And can be found in the attached table.

Once we send this out to districts for the 45-day review period, we will bring that feedback and comments to you at the May 18, 2023 Commission meeting for your consideration and final approval.

Requested Action (if action item):

Approve the revised draft Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedure Manual for a review and comment period.

Staff Contact:

Sarah Groth, sgroth@scc.wa.gov

Shana Joy, sjoy@scc.wa.gov

Grant and Contract Procedure Manual

Details of Proposed Changes Effective July 1, 2023

General Changes: The regional managers and finance team worked together to address, define, and clarify the content in the manual. Many corrections were made for grammatical construction or word flow and other general changes were intended to enhance consistency of formatting and terminology. The manual also updated general terminology in the cost share section providing clarification on terms such as cooperator, landowner and operator. The committee reworked many sections to include links to information to provide further clarity on policies. At the end of the manual we will also insert a page with a link to all our forms and other district resources to have them organized all in one place for ease of use.

Specific Changes:

Page Number	Section	Change	Reason
9	1: General Information	Adding SCC's Electronic Signature approval of grant and contract forms.	SCC has approved the use of electronic signatures on most contract and grant forms.
27	4: Reimbursable Expenses	Updated the equipment purchase limit without prior approval to \$2,000 and added clarifying language that the limit is on a single item, not a multiple items added together to total \$2,000. Also added clarification that if equipment was specifically requested in funding proposal additional approval is not needed.	We have been getting many requests for equipment purchases over \$1,000 this biennium. This limit has been the same for over ten years. With inflated costs and more grant funding, it will give the districts more flexibility to purchase needed equipment without additional approval if we update the limit. Also, administratively, if the equipment request was already approved in the grant addendum or project funding request, we would not have to have another set of approval.
30-35	5: Special Programs	Updated and clarified the language and added new links to the updated programmatic rules for all programs.	Programmatic guidelines were updated to reflect updated policies and provide further guidance on cost share and DIP implementation.
44-46	7: Conservation District	Updated the language to include both operating and capital funding as allowable	With increased operating funding and new programs such as SRF and SFF, the districts need help

	Advance and Initial Payments	under the advance payment option as well as DIP projects.	to relieve cash flow issues when reimbursing landowners or utilizing the DIP option.
48 - 49	8: Cost Share	Increased the participant labor rate to \$25 per hour and cost share limit to \$100,000 per fiscal year.	With SCC's increased operating and capital budget, we needed to reevaluate the current cost share limit that has been in place since 2013. In order to reach larger projects and rising costs, we propose to increase the limit to \$100,000. The landowner labor rate is also proposed to move to \$25 per hour due to inflation and rising labor costs.
65-69	9: District Implemented Projects (DIP)	Added a new chapter to the manual to outline the rules associated with the new DIP project type.	BI21-23 we introduced the District Implemented Project (DIP) where the district is the lead planner and implementer of the project. It differs from the traditional cost share project where the landowner hires the contractor and is reimbursed for costs to implement the project. In a DIP, the district pays for the project via grant funding.



Washington State Conservation Commission

March 16, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting & Budget

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2023 Year End Funding Timeline

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

Requested Action (if action item):

*Review and approval of the proposed Fiscal Year 2023 Year End Funding Timeline and process to award operating funding **IF** any funding is available.*

Staff Contact:

Sarah Groth, sgroth@scc.wa.gov or 360-790-3501

Background and Discussion:

As in past years SCC Fiscal & Regional Manager staff are preparing for possibility of available fiscal year operating funds. This timeline is similar to last fiscal years and gives conservation districts more time to put their requests together and gives fiscal staff and Regional Managers more time to review and vet those requests. It also gives conservation districts more time once funding awards have been made to make their purchases and/or complete projects.

Below is a proposed timeline.

Proposed Fiscal Year 2023 Year End Funding Timeline

- March 16, 2023: present the commissioners with the timeline and request approval of timeline & process
- April 6, 2023: Send the form out to districts
- April 28, 2023: Form due back to SCC
- May 1– 5, 2023: SCC fiscal staff to compile and roll up the submissions
- May 8-10, 2023: SCC fiscal staff & RM's will review submissions and pull together recommendations for final action at the May 18, 2023 commission meeting

Recommended Action and Options (if action item):

Approve process & timeline as listed above.



Washington State Conservation Commission

March 16, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting & Budget

SUBJECT: Reviewal of WACD & SCC Agreement

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

Summary:

Each year the SCC requests approval to enter into a contract with WACD for contract work on tasks identified by SCC Executive Director and SCC leadership.

Requested Action (if action item):

Approve the request for SCC Executive Director Christopher Pettit to work with WACD Executive Director Tom Salzer to develop a scope of work. 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. The final amount of the contract and draft contract would be approved at the May 18, 2023 commission meeting.

Staff Contact:

Sarah Groth, sgroth@scc.wa.gov or 360-790-3501

Background and Discussion:

As in past years SCC would need to begin this work now to fully comply with the sole source contract requirements & review by Department of Enterprise Services (DES) and for the WACD contract to be able to start July 1, 2023.

Recommended Action and Options (if action item):

Approve the request for SCC Executive Director Christopher Pettit to work with WACD Executive Director Tom Salzer to develop a scope of work to bring back a draft contract for review at the May 18, 2023 commission meeting.



Washington State Conservation Commission

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Josh Giuntoli, SW Regional Manager

DATE: March 16, 2023

SUBJECT: Petition for Inclusion of Territory into the Grays Harbor Conservation District

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

The incorporated City of Aberdeen approved a petition to be annexed into the Grays Harbor Conservation District. The District and City, pursuant to RCW 89.08 and established procedure, have submitted a Petition for Inclusion of Additional Territory within the Grays Harbor Conservation District.

At the February 8, 2023, city council meeting of the City of Aberdeen, a motion was approved for inclusion in the District boundary.

*Request for Council Action from Public Works and the Public Works Director recommending that the City Council authorize the Mayor to sign the petition for inclusion of the City of Aberdeen within the Grays Harbor Conservation District. **Motion to adopt by Councilmember Shaw, seconded by Councilmember Lawrence. Discussion. Carried by voice vote.***

Requested Action (if action item):

I formally request, on behalf of the District and the City of Aberdeen, that the Commission approve the petition for inclusion of the City of Aberdeen within the boundaries of the Grays Harbor Conservation District.

Staff Contact:

Josh Giuntoli, SW Regional Manager, email: jgiuntoli@scc.wa.gov



Washington State Conservation Commission

March 16, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Kate Delavan

SUBJECT: FPLA Project Approval – Beaver Valley Farm Funding Authorization

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

The Farmland Protection and Land Access (FPLA) Work Group reviewed the Beaver Valley Farm application from the Jefferson Land Trust. The Work Group found the application strongly aligns with the FPLA program intent and recommends the Beaver Valley Farm project for FPLA funding.

Requested Action (if action item):

The FPLA Work Group and SCC staff request the Conservation Commission approves the Beaver Valley project for funding and authorizes the Conservation Commission's Executive Director to sign the conservation easement as a third-party beneficiary.

Staff Contact:

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

Background and Discussion:

The Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP) received the Beaver Valley Farm application from Jefferson Land Trust in Feb. 2023. The Work Group reviewed the application on Feb. 15, 2023. The Work Group consists of representatives from Washington State University Extension, Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington State Housing Finance Commission, American Farmland Trust, and the Conservation Commission.

Project Overview

The Jefferson Land Trust (JLT) secured a FarmPAI loan and purchased the 39-acre Beaver Valley Farm in January 2023 as the first step in a Buy-Protect-Sell (BPS) transaction. JLT is seeking FPLA funding to protect the farm via an agricultural conservation easement and complete the second step on the BPS transaction. An FPLA funded easement would permanently protect the property for

Washington State Conservation Commission
Olympia, Washington 98504

PETITION FOR INCLUSION OF ADDITIONAL TERRITORY
WITHIN THE
GRAYS HARBOR CONSERVATION DISTRICT

TO: The Washington State Conservation Commission

Pursuant to the Conservation Districts Law (Chapter 89.08 RCW) the undersigning government authorities of the City of Aberdeen and the Grays Harbor Conservation District, respectfully represent:

- First: That heretofore the Grays Harbor Conservation District was duly organized as a governmental subdivision of this state, and a public body corporate and politic.
- Second: That there is need, in the interest of the public health, safety, and welfare, for the inclusion of the territory hereinafter described within the said Grays Harbor Conservation District.
- Third: That the territory proposed for inclusion within the said district includes substantially the following:

Incorporated City of Aberdeen, Washington

WHEREFORE, the undersigned petitioners respectfully request that the State Conservation Commission duly define the boundaries of the additional territory; and that the State Conservation Commission determine that such additional territory be so included and made a part of the Grays Harbor Conservation District.

Grays Harbor Conservation District (GHCD)

Lisa Laborce
GHCD Authorized Signer

[Signature]
GHCD Authorized Signer

GHCD Authorized Signer

Date: 3/14/2023

City of Aberdeen

[Signature]
Mayor

3-10-23
Date

agriculture and remove its speculative development value. The estimated easement value is \$285,000. This easement removes one development right in an area under high pressure for conversion to residential development.

The Beaver Valley Farm property, located about 1.5 miles south of Chimacum on Beaver Valley Rd (Hwy 19) in Jefferson County, consists of mostly low lying pastureland that is Farmland of Statewide Importance. Beaver Valley and nearby Center Valley contain the east fork and mainstem of Chimacum Creek and are the most productive agricultural lands in east Jefferson County. These valleys have been the focus of significant community efforts to protect working farms and salmon habitat over the last 30 years.

The property has a well, irrigation infrastructure, and temporary shelters. Adjacent lands to the north and west are protected with conservation easements held by Jefferson Land Trust and there is a thriving surrounding agricultural landscape of farms producing crops for local and regional markets. It has a long history of agricultural use, and the previous owners used it for hay and corn production and pasture for cattle since the 1970s. The most recent production was hay for the former landowner's cattle that are raised on their nearby home farm in the adjacent valley.

The property is a high priority for agricultural production and protection due to the prime soils and irrigation water right and system, agricultural zoning, proximity of other protected lands and scarcity of affordable farmland for the next generation of farmers. JLT's goal is to preserve the farm with a conservation easement that will retire one of the two existing development rights, prevent subdivision, protect the prime agricultural soils and allow for restoration of approximately 3-acres of low-lying wetland area. JLT will work with the County, the Jefferson County Conservation District, wetland consultants and other partners to improve the wetland habitat while also ensuring the viability of the associated pastureland.

JLT expects that funding from FPLA for purchase of the conservation easement will reduce the value of the farm by approximately 40%, helping to make the farm more affordable for the next generation of farmers. JLT is developing a land access process with the help of the Jefferson LandWorks Collaborative partners who have worked closely with JTL in the past to select farmer/buyers/lessees from historically underserved communities.

FPLA Program Guidelines require a qualified government entity holds a third-party right of enforcement on FPLA funded easements. JLT is requesting the SCC, as the sole funder, hold the third party of enforcement on the Beaver Valley Farm conservation easement. Acting as the third-party beneficiary allows the SCC to enforce the terms of the easement in the unlikely event JLT is no longer willing or able to.

Recommended Action:

The Work Group found the application strongly aligns with the FPLA program intent and recommends the Beaver Valley Farm project for FPLA funding.

Draft Motion:

The Conservation Commission accepts the FPLA Work Group's recommendation regarding Jefferson Land Trust's Beaver Valley Farm application. The Conservation Commission approves up to \$345,000 in FPLA funding for the acquisition of an agricultural conservation easement on the Beaver Valley Farm by Jefferson Land Trust. The Conservation Commission authorizes its Executive Director to sign the conservation easement as a third-party beneficiary.

TAB 2



Washington State Conservation Commission

March 16, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Christopher Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Ron Shultz, SCC Policy Director

SUBJECT: Legislative Session Update

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

The 2023 Legislative Session has passed the half-way point, including the major house of origin cutoff. Many bills the SCC is tracking didn't make the cutoff, but several did. This report is a status on the SCC priority legislation and budget items.

Requested Action (if action item):

No action requested.

Staff Contact:

Ron Shultz, SCC Policy Director rshultz@scc.wa.gov

Background and Discussion:

When the Commission meets on March 16, it will be day 67 of the 105 day session. Session ends Sunday, April 23. By March 8, all bills must be out of their house of origin, a major cutoff date that will narrow the bills under consideration.

At the time of this writing we have already passed two significant cutoff dates: bills out of committee and bills out of fiscal committee. As the surviving bills have gone to the respective chambers for final passage consideration we are still tracking several bills of interest. Here are the stats:

House

Total Number of Bills Tracked: 43

Bills Still Alive (as of 3/1/23): 22

Senate

Total Number of Bills Tracked: 34

Bills Still Alive (as of 3/1/23): 8

Bills of Interest Still Alive

HB 1552 – Directing the state conservation commission to conduct a study of urban agriculture opportunities and barriers in the state.

- Establishes required elements of the study, including how urban agriculture can provide economic development, food access, and education opportunities in local communities.
- Requires the Commission to submit the report to the Legislature by June 30, 2024.

SHB 1567 – Commissioning a study on conservation district election costs under Title 29A RCW.

Underlying bill directs study to be done by the WA State Institute on Public Policy. Substitute bill changes the due date for the final report to June 30, 2024, but specifies that the WSIPP must provide as much information as possible to the legislature in a preliminary report by the original due date of December 1, 2023. Permits the study to consider only the past 6 years of voter turnout, rather than the past 20, if the district only has such data.

SHB 1138 – Concerning drought preparedness.

Provides project funded by grants issued to address drought conditions no longer need to be completed while a drought emergency order is in effect. The original bill included additional funding for drought preparedness but the House Appropriations Committee amended the bill to strip funding. It may appear in the budget.

E2SHB 1170 – Improving climate resilience through updates to the state's integrated climate response strategy.

Requires Ecology to update the state Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy by July 2024. Bill adds the Conservation Commission to the list of agencies to assist in the strategy update.

SHB 1216 – Concerning clean energy siting.

Establishes an interagency clean energy siting coordinating council to be co-chaired by Ecology and Commerce.

SHB 1322 – Implementing the Walla Walla water 2050 plan.

Provides that the one-third / two-thirds allocation of water resources between instream and out of stream uses established for new water supplies developed in the Columbia River basin does not apply to applications for water rights implementing the Walla Walla Water 2050 Plan adopted June 30, 2021.

VSP Opt-in

Both the House and Senate have bills proposing to re-open VSP to allow non-VSP counties to opt-in. Both bills are still alive: HB 1421 and SSB 5353. The Commission has testified on both bills

with a position of “other/concerns”. In our testimony we stated we have no opinion on bringing more counties into VSP, but our concern is funding for new counties should not come from existing funding for existing VSP counties. The Senate amended their bill in the Senate Ag Committee to include specific language addressing our concerns. On March 2, the Senate passed SSB 5353 unanimously.

Bills of Interest Not Passing

The following two bills were sponsored by Senator Sharon Shewmake and she worked closely with Commission staff and stakeholders. The bills did not pass from the Senate Agriculture Committee but there are efforts to convert the bills to budget provisos.

SB 5484 - Supporting Washington's food production system by providing technical assistance in support of improved voluntary environmental stewardship.

Establishes sustainable farms and fields advisors at the Commission and conservation districts to assist landowners in climate-smart practices.

SB 5551 - Supporting Washington's crop and livestock farms, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and generating renewable energy by capturing methane.

The bill directs funding for cost-share grants for the Sustainable Farms and Fields Program to improving climate-smart agricultural waste management and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The bill also establishes an ongoing, multi-stakeholder advisory committee administered by the Conservation Commission and WSDA to inform the agricultural community about opportunities to participate in various carbon emissions reduction programs and guide grant awards.

Elements of the Salmon Riparian Grant Program Discussions.

When the legislative session started, we had the Governor’s riparian grant bill HB 1215. The bill created a salmon riparian grant program at the Commission. The bill included several provisions and criteria for the program. It also included a section creating a stakeholder group to review incentive programs. It also had a section creating a multi-state agency entity to evaluate how the grant program was working and make recommendations for adaptive management in the critical riparian areas to be addressed.

The bill was well received by some ag groups and tribes, but several tribes and environmental organizations did not like the bill. One concern was the proposal to put so much money at the State Conservation Commission (Gov’s budget proposed \$100m) many didn’t think the Commission could move that amount of funding in two years. Others were concerned about the Commission leading in this area because of a sense that the Commission doesn’t have sufficient standards when implementing projects.

These concerns led to the House Agriculture Committee chair Rep Mike Chapman to convene a group of legislators and stakeholders to craft a new bill...HB 1720. The bill still includes a section creating the Riparian Incentives Grant Program at the Commission, but it also includes a new section, a mirror of the SCC program only it would be at RCO.

The bill (1720) also eliminated the state agency coordination group. It also removed reference to specific scientific documents as best available science to be used by the Commission to establish minimum standards for riparian project funding. The Governor's Office is very concerned about removing these references to standards. The Governor would like to see some clear reference to required standards for the grant program criteria.

The bill passed the House Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee on a unanimous vote. However it was referred to the House Capital Budget Committee where the bill stalled over various concerns regarding the creation of two nearly identical programs, the need for standards, how the program criteria would be developed, among others. As a result, the bill died in committee. However conversations are underway with agencies, the Gov's Office, and House and Senate members on possible budget proviso language.

Discussions on the budget provisos will get underway in earnest after the March 8 cutoff for bills to be out of their house of origin.

Recommended Action and Options (if action item):

None.

Next Steps (if informational item):

The last day of session is Sunday, April 23.

We anticipate budgets to be released sometime around mid-March, after the March 17 revenue forecast.

2023 Bills of Interest

Only Bills Still Alive After First Fiscal Cutoff

As of March 3, 2023

<u>2023 Session Cut-Off Dates:</u> Friday, Feb 17 – Last day for policy comm bills. Friday, Feb 24 – Last day for fiscal comm bills. Wed., March 8 – Last day for bills in house of origin.	Wed., March 29 – Last day for policy comm bills, opposite chamber. Tues., April 4 – Last day for fiscal comm bills, opposite chamber. Wed., April 12 – Last day to consider bills from opposite chamber. Sun., April 23 – Last day of session.
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NOTE: Bills highlighted in yellow are still alive and eligible for a floor vote.

NOTE: PH = Public Hearing ES = Executive Session (vote)

Bill	Sponsor (first name) Cosponsors	Bill Title (bold) – Subject/Description	Status	Relevance to WSCC Testify/Comment/Track
HOUSE BILLS				
<u>SHB 1105</u>	Kloba, Abbarno	Requiring public agencies to provide notice for public comment that includes the last date by which such public comment must be submitted.	Jan 31 – Sub pass in HStGovt <u>Feb 2 – H Rules</u>	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Amends the OPMA to include a new requirement for last day comment may be submitted. This may apply to both the SCC and CDs along with the other OPMA notice requirements.
<u>SHB 1133</u> SB 5357	Chapman, Low	Establishing limitations on detached accessory dwelling units outside urban growth areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorizes counties planning under the Growth 	Jan 17 – PH in HHouse Jan 19 – ES in	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> None <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Development outside UGA identified by Food Policy Forum as an issue

		<p>Management Act to allow detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) outside of urban growth areas if the ADU is subject to development regulations that include certain limits.</p> <p><u>Substitute Bill Adds:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adding that the detached ADU must be sited to prevent loss of land that is defined as "agricultural land" or "forestland" under the GMA; and • adding that the parcel may not be subdivided for the purposes of avoiding the limits on development regulations described in the bill. 	<p>HHouse Jan 26 – sub pass in HHouse Jan 30 – H Rules</p>	<p>impacting farmland preservation. Monitor to determine if bill impacts farmland to the extent comment is warranted.</p>
<u>SHB 1138</u>	<p>Chapman, Dent, Ramel, Leavitt, Doglio, Lekanoff, Donaghy, Ormsby; req of ECY</p>	<p>Concerning drought preparedness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides that projects funded by grants issued to address drought conditions no longer need to be completed while a drought emergency order is in effect. • Directs \$2.5 million each biennium to the Drought Preparedness Account. • Allows expenditure from the Account upon issuance of a drought emergency order. <p><u>Approps Substitute Bill:</u> Removes transfer of \$2.5 million each biennium from state GF to Drought Preparedness Account. Removes transfer of \$3m each FY in years when a drought is declared.</p>	<p>Jan 13 – PH in H Ag Jan 17 – Pass H Ag Jan 19 – Ref to H Approps Feb 6 – PH in H Approps Feb 9 – Sub pass in H Approps Feb 14 – Ref to H Rules Feb 28 – H pass sub 96y-0n Mar 2 – Ref to S Ag</p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Testify <u>Position:</u> Support <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Support this bill to enhance the state’s ability to reduce the impacts of water shortage due to drought, both during and between declared events.</p>
<u>HB 1140</u>	<p>Ormsby, Gregerson Req of OFM</p>	<p>Making 2023-25 operating appropriations.</p>	<p>Jan 11 – PH in H Approps</p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> Support <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> SCC will provide information to legislators individually on the elements of the budget impacting the SCC and CDs.</p>

HB 1141	Ormsby, Gregerson Req of OFM	Making 2021-23 second supplemental operating appropriations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removes reference to salmon recovery funding in the SCC operating budget. This is a technical matter since they are moving these funds to the capital budget. 	Jan 11 – PH in H Approps	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> None <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> See note in bill description. This approach is expected since OFM is moving the funding to the capital budget.
HB 1147	Tharinger Req of OFM	Concerning the capital budget.	Jan 12 – PH in H CapBud	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> Support <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> SCC will provide information to legislators individually on the elements of the budget impacting the SCC and CDs.
E2SHB 1170 SB 5093	Street, Couture Req of ECY	Improving climate resilience through updates to the state’s integrated climate response strategy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to update the Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy (Strategy) by July 2024, and every four years thereafter, and report on implementation and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature. Expands Ecology's collaboration and engagement requirements, and requires Ecology to work with the University of Wa Climate Impacts Group when updating the Strategy. Adds to and makes changes to the requirements for the Strategy's content. Requires Ecology to coordinate a state response to climate resilience related federal funding opportunities. 	Jan 12 – PH in H Enviro Jan 26 – Sub pass in H Enviro Feb 6 – PH in H Approps Feb 9 – H Approps pass 2 nd sub Feb 27 – floor amend adopted; H pass 82y-14n Mar 10 – PH in S Enviro	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track Only <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Adds the SCC to list of agencies assisting in the development of the strategy.
SHB 1181	Duerr, Fitzgibbon Req of Gov	Improving the state’s response to climate change by updating the state’s planning framework.	Jan 17 – PH in HLGovt	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> none

SB 5203		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds climate element to GMA comp plans. • Adds requirement to land use element of comp plans must identify land use planning tools to reduce risk to property from wildfires through planning. 	Jan 25 – Sub pass in HLG Feb 6 – PH in H Approps Feb 9 – Pass in H Approps w 2 nd sub Feb 14 – Ref to H Rules Mar 1 – 2 nd reading	<u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Monitor for any changes to the existing bill language regarding use of land use tools to reduce fire risk.
SHB 1216	Fitzgibbon, Doglio	Concerning clean energy siting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes an interagency clean energy siting coordinating council to be co-chaired by Ecology and Commerce. • Directs Commerce to establish a new program for the designation of Clean Energy Projects of Statewide Significance (CEPSS), and assign CEPSS a clean energy navigator. • Makes certain CEPSS eligible for a coordinated permitting process to be overseen by Ecology, after Ecology completes an initial assessment of the projects' likely permit application and review process. • Amends provisions of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) for certain types of clean energy projects, including directing lead agencies to complete environmental impact statements (EISs) within 24 months and clarifying the content of SEPA review for clean energy projects. • Directs Ecology to prepare nonproject EISs for solar projects in the Columbia Basin and for green electrolytic or renewable hydrogen projects, and directs the Washington State University energy program to conduct a least-conflict pumped storage siting process. 	Jan 10 – Ref to HEnviro Jan 19 – PH in H Enviro Feb 9 – pass H Enviro w amend Feb 23 – pass 2 nd sub in H Approps Feb 25 – Ref to H Rules Mar 1 – 2 nd reading	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Siting of clean energy projects is important to CDs and an issue for OFP as the projects may take out farmland.

HB 1285	Goehner, Chandler	<p>Modifying the scope of locations to which a water right established as a family farm permit may be transferred.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expands the locations to which a family farm permit may be transferred to include a limited area of more intensive rural development and a master planned resort. • Expands the sources of legal authority governing water rights within a master planned resort to include the Family Farm Water Act. 	<p>Jan 13 – Ref to HAgNR Jan 24 – PH in HAgNR Feb 17 – sub pass in H AgNR Ref to H Rules</p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> <u>Position:</u> <u>Comment/Impacts:</u></p>
2SHB 1322 SB 5384	Rude, Chapman, Klicker; req of ECY	<p>Concerning the Walla Walla water 2050 plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides that the one-third / two-thirds allocation of water resources between instream and out of stream uses established for new water supplies developed in the Columbia River basin does not apply to applications for water rights implementing the Walla Walla Water 2050 Plan adopted June 30, 2021. • Requires that, in financing projects to implement the Walla Walla Water 2050 Plan, Ecology must obtain no more than 50 percent of the total project costs from state funding sources. • Directs Ecology to evaluate the development of a bistate legal regulatory framework for the allocation of developed water resources in collaboration with the State of Oregon. • Requires that water supplies developed under the act be apportioned between Oregon and Washington consistent with any written agreements entered into with the State of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. • Authorizes Ecology to designate water supplies 	<p>Jan 24 – PH in HAgNR Jan 31 – Sub pass in HAgNR Feb 1 – Ref to H CapBud Feb 16 – PH in H CapBud Feb 20 – ES in H CapBud Feb 22 – Ref to H Rules Mar 2 – Pass H 96y-0n</p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> Support <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Implements CD work with Walla Walla stakeholders.</p>

		developed under the act for instream flow purposes and be placed into the trust water rights program.		
EHB 1337	Gregerson, Barkis	<p>Expanding housing options by easing barriers to the construction and use of accessory dwelling units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires fully planning cities and counties to allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in urban growth areas (UGAs). Prohibits certain ADU regulations within UGAs. 	<p>Jan 16 – Ref to HHouse</p> <p>Jan 23 – PH in HHouse</p> <p>Feb 2 – Pass HHouse</p> <p>Mar 2 – floor amend, pass H 81y-15n</p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track only</p> <p><u>Position:</u> none</p> <p><u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Track as an OFP issue and supports FPF recommendations for increased urban infill.</p>
HB 1365	Dye	<p>Improving Puget Sound water quality.</p> <p><u>Substitute Bill:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removes the new Office of Puget Sound Water Quality and instead directs the Ecology to carry out the work authorized in the bill under its existing authorities. Clarifies that Ecology must provide grants within funds appropriated for the purpose of municipal wastewater nutrient discharge reduction projects, and removes reference to Climate Commitment Act revenues and private funds. Clarifies that the reporting by operators of municipal wastewater systems must include discharges of partially treated sewage as well as untreated sewage, and that this reporting is in addition to the required reporting under individual National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits. Directs Ecology to share its summary report with a diverse group of news media outlets, instead of than major news media outlets. 	<p>Jan 17 – Ref to H Enviro</p> <p>Feb 14 – PH in H Enviro</p> <p>Feb 16 – Pass sub</p> <p>Feb 22 – Pass H CapBud</p> <p>Feb 24 – Ref to H Rules</p> <p>Feb 28 – 2nd reading</p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track only</p> <p><u>Position:</u> none</p> <p><u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Monitor to see if bill moves. Creates new PS water quality office at ECY. Focus is in muni and point source, but watch to make sure not addressing non-point.</p>

HB 1381	Dye, Lekanoff	<p>Concerning salmon-safe communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing urban heat islands. <p><u>Substitute Bill:</u> Replaces section 2 with an evaluation of the urban heat island effect and water temperatures in urban areas by Ecology, in collaboration with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Natural Resources,</p>	<p>Jan 17 – Ref to H Enviro Jan 23 – PH in H Enviro Feb 16 – Pass sub H Enviro Feb 23 – Pass H Approps Feb 24 – Ref to H Rules Feb 28 – 2nd reading</p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track only <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Watch for impacts to VSP.</p>
HB 1421 SB 5353	Chambers, Rule	<p>Adding counties to the voluntary stewardship program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows counties to opt-in by July 1, 2024. 	<p>Jan 31 – PH in HLGovt Feb 3 – Pass HLGovt Feb 21 – Pass H Approps Feb 27 – 2nd reading calendar</p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Testify <u>Position:</u> Neutral <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Testify no position but need new funding for any new counties.</p>
HB 1498	Dye, Dent	<p>Concerning aviation assurance funding in response to wildland fires.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates the Aviation Assurance Funding Program (Program) within the State Conservation Commission for the purpose of assisting local fire suppression entities with defraying the cost of contracting for private aerial fire response capabilities during the initial attack phase of fighting a wildland fire. Establishes criteria for the award of funding pursuant to the Program. 	<p>Feb 3 – PH in H AgNR Feb 15 – ES in H AgNR Pass sub Feb 24 – Pass H Approps Mar 2 – 2nd reading</p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> track <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Substitute bill changes the implementing agency to DNR. No longer concerned about the bill.</p>

		<u>Substitute Bill:</u> Creates program at DNR. Seeks new funding for the program		
SHB 1500 SB 5107	Eslick	Increasing the cap on gross sales for cottage food operations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the cap from \$25k to \$50k. Every 2 years WSDA must adjust the cap based on the CPI. H Ag Substitute Bill: Changes the WSDA review from 2 years to 4 years.	Jan 27 – PH in HAgNR Feb 3 – Sub pass in HAgNR Feb 16 – Pass H 98y-0n Feb 17 – Ref to S Ag	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> support <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> The bill is an issue for OFP by allowing ag producers, particularly smaller producers, to have value added production.
HB 1541 SB 5616	Farivar, Couture, Mena, Pollet, Taylor, Ortiz-Self, Street, Thai, Reed, Waters, Fosse, Caldier, Simmons, Davis, Alvarado, Schmidt, Ryu, Griffey, Ramel, Barnard, Orwall, Hackney, Bergquist and Walen	Establishing the nothing about us without us act. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The legislature intends to ensure meaningful participation from people with direct lived experience on each statutorily created or statutorily mandated multimember task force, work group, advisory committee, board, commission, council, or other similar entity tasked with examining policies or issues that directly and tangibly affect historically underrepresented communities. must: (a) Include individuals from underrepresented populations who have direct lived experience with the identified issue or issues that the statutory entity is tasked with examining.. 	Feb 3 – PH in H StGovt Feb 10 – ES in H StGovt Pass Sub Feb 24 – 2nd sub pass H Approps Mar 2 – 2 nd reading	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track only <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> May impact Commission and FPF. May impact districts.
HB 1552	Reeves	Directing the state conservation commission to conduct a study of urban agriculture opportunities and barriers in the state. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes required elements of the study, including how urban agriculture can provide 	Jan 31 – PH in H AgNR Feb 3 – PASS H AgNR Feb 7 – Ref to H	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Testify <u>Position:</u> Support <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Supports recommendations of the FPF. Need funding for the study.

		<p>economic development, food access, and education opportunities in local communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires the Commission to submit the report to the Legislature by June 30, 2024. 	<p>Rules Feb 22 – 2nd reading Feb 28 – pass H 97y-on Mar 2 – Ref to S Ag</p>	
SHB 1567	Gregerson, Lekanoff, Jacobsen, Doglio, Reed	<p>Commissioning a study on conservation district election costs under Title 29A RCW</p> <p>H St Govt Amendment: Changes the due date for the final report to June 30, 2024, but specifies that the WSIPP must provide as much information as possible to the legislature in a preliminary report by the original due date of December 1, 2023. Permits the study to consider only the past 6 years of voter turnout, rather than the past 20, if the district only has such data.</p>	<p>Jan 25 – Ref to H StGovt Feb 7 – PH in H StGovt Feb 10 – Pass H StGovt w amend Feb 14 – Ref to H Rules</p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Testify <u>Position:</u> Concerns <u>Comment/Impacts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time period of information requested is too long. Recommend consistency with local retention requirements. Study should include other special purpose districts. Bill should include CD general election opt-in language.
SHB 1578 SB 5611	Springer, Kretz, Reeves, Leavitt, Ramel, Lekanoff, Reed, Pollet, Kloba; req of DNR	<p>Improving community preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience to wildland fire health and safety impacts in areas of increasing population density, including in the wildland urban interface.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DNR must assess areas at significant risk for wildfire, by decade, for a period encompassing not less than 39 years. The assessment must include an analysis of the predicted climate influence on wildfire risk in the state and provide enough detail for landowners, the public, local governments, and tribal nations to develop strategies to address wildfire risk. The department must provide the first risk assessment to the appropriate committees of the legislature by July 1, 2025. 	<p>Feb 8 – PH in H AgNR Feb 14 – ES in H AgNR pass sub Feb 23 – 2nd sub pass H Approps. Feb 24 – H Rules</p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track only <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Activities support CD work in the forest space, particularly with landowners.</p>

HB 1589 SB 5562	Doglio, Fitzgibbon	Supporting Washington's clean energy economy and transitioning to a clean, affordable, and reliable energy future. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibits any gas company with more than 500,000 retail natural gas customers from hooking up any new retail or commercial customers after June 30, 2023. Requires gas companies to develop decarbonization plans. 	Jan 25 – Ref to H Enviro Feb 6 – PH in H Enviro Feb 13 – ES in H Enviro pass sub Feb 16 – Ref to H Rules	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track Only <u>Position:</u> None <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Question – whether the ban on new hook-ups will impact agriculture and processors?
HB 1686	Lekanoff, Kretz, Chapman, Dent, Doglio, Barkis, Springer, Hutchins, Peterson, Reed, Stokesbary, Fey, Timmons, Robertson, Leavitt, Reeves, Ortiz-Self, Ramel, Pollet	Concerning salmon recovery reform. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates the Joint Salmon Recovery and Reform Committee. 	Feb 15 – Pass H AgNR Feb 23 – Sub pass H Approps Feb 24 – Ref to H Rules	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track only <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> The new entity would review a number of salmon recovery programs, including some at the SCC.
SHB 1720	Chapman, Dent, Lekanoff, Kretz, Volz, Klicker, Schmidt, Schmick, Couture, Goehner, Chambers, Ybarra, Stokesbary, Robertson, Sandlin, Christian, Reeves, Morgan, Orcutt, Corry, Barkis, Graham, Dye, Hutchins, Cheney	Concerning the protection and restoration of riparian areas through the establishment of a fully voluntary, regionally focused riparian grant program designed to improve the ecological functions of critical riparian management zones.	Feb 2 – Ref to H AgNR Feb 7 – PH in H AgNR Feb 17 – Sub pass in H AgNR Feb 22 – ES in H Cap Bud, no action taken.	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> Supportive <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Creates salmon recovery grant program at the SCC. Will significantly impact the SCC and CD work if proposed funding is provided.
HB 1775	Lekanoff, Chapman	Limiting liability for salmon recovery projects performed by regional fisheries enhancement groups.	Feb 10 – PH in H AgNR Feb 15 – Pass in H	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u>

			AgNR Feb 16 – Ref to H Rules Feb 28 – pass H 95y – 0n Mar 2 – ref to S Ag	Many CDs work with their local regional fisheries enhancement groups on projects.
HB 1792	Timmons, Dent	Modifying timelines and other initial procedural actions in a water rights adjudication.	Feb 14 – PH in H AgNR Feb 17 – Pass in H AgNR Feb 28 – Pass H 97y – 0n Mar 2 – Ref to S Ag	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> <u>Position:</u> <u>Comment/Impacts:</u>

SENATE BILLS

<u>SSB 5005</u>	Pedersen, Padden, Dhingra, Nobles	<p>Concerning real property.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes requirements for the partition of heirs property. Allows servient estate owners to file a civil action to relocate various easements if certain requirements are satisfied. 	<p>Jan 26 – sub pass S Law</p> <p>Feb 8 – Sub pass S 49y-0n</p> <p>Feb 9 – Ref to H CivRights</p> <p><u>Mar 2 – PH in H Civ Rights</u></p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track only.</p> <p><u>Position:</u> none</p> <p><u>Comment/Impacts:</u> May have implications for OFP on how easements are structured to ensure easement survival in division of property to heirs.</p>
<u>SSB 5093</u> HB 1170	Rolfes, Lovelett, Hasegawa, Kuderer, Liias, Nguyen, Pedersen, Salomon, Valdez, Wellman; req of ECY	<p>Improving climate resilience through updates to the state's integrated climate response strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires the Department of Ecology to update the state's Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy by July 1, 2024. Includes the SCC among the agencies assisting in the development of the strategy. 	<p>Jan 20 – PH in S Enviro</p> <p>Jan 27 – sub pass in S Enviro</p> <p>Feb 13 – PH in S Ways</p> <p><u>Feb 20 – pass S Ways</u></p> <p><u>Feb 21 – S Rules</u></p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track only.</p> <p><u>Position:</u> none</p> <p><u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Adds the SCC to the list of agencies required to develop the state strategy.</p>
<u>SSB 5156</u>	Torres, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Hunt, Muzzall, Nobles, Randall, Rolfes, Schoesler, Shewmake, Wagoner, Warnick, Wellman, WilsonL	<p>Expanding the farm internship program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extends the farm internship pilot program to all counties. Removes the expiration of the program. Adds a requirement to obtain the special certificate that the interns will perform work that encourages the interns to participate in career and technical education or other educational content with courses in agriculture or related programs at a community or technical college. Increases the annual sales for the definition of a small farm to less than \$265,000, rather than less than \$250,000. 	<p>Jan 17 – 1st sub pass S Labor</p> <p>Jan 25 – sub pass 49y 0n</p> <p><u>Jan 27 – ref to H Labor</u></p>	<p><u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track only</p> <p><u>Position:</u> none</p> <p><u>Comment/Impacts:</u> OFP issue of ensuring continuing path of new farmers into the farming.</p>

SB 5187 HB 1140	Rolfes, Robinson; req of OFM	Making 2023-2025 fiscal biennium operating appropriations.	Jan 9 – Ref to S Ways Jan 10 – PH in S Ways	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> Support <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> SCC will provide information to legislators individually on the elements of the budget impacting the SCC and CDs.
SB 5188 HB 1141	Rolfes, Robinson; req of OFM	Making 2021-2023 fiscal biennium second supplemental operating appropriations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes language to move current SRF operating funds to capital. 	Jan 9 – Ref to S Ways Jan 10 – PH in S Ways.	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track only <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> See bullet re SRF funds.
SB 5200 HB 1147	Mullet, Schoesler; req of OFM	Concerning the capital budget.	Jan 9 – Ref to S Ways	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> Support <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> SCC will provide information to legislators individually on the elements of the budget impacting the SCC and CDs.
SSB 5235 HB 1276	Shewmake, Frame, Lovelett, Nguyen, Pedersen, Salomon	Concerning accessory dwelling units. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires fully planning cities and counties to allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in urban growth areas (UGAs). Prohibits certain ADU regulations within UGAs. Allows cities and counties to offer incentives for the construction or development of ADUs. <p>S Local Govt Amendment: Provisions only apply within the UGA and not the county.</p>	Jan 10 – ref to S LGovt Jan 26 – PH S LGovt Feb 9 – Sub pass S LGovt Feb 27 – Pass S 42y-6n Mar 9 – PH in H Housing	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track Only <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Relates to FPF Land Use recommendations re increase density in UGA to relieve development pressure on farmland.
ESB 5341	Muzzall, Shewmake, Van De Wege, Torres, Warnick; req of WSDA	Creating a location-based branding and promotion program for Washington food and agricultural products.	Jan 23 – PH in SAg Jan 26 – pass SAg Ref to S Ways	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Sign-in only <u>Position:</u> support <u>Comment/Impacts:</u>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directs the Washington State Department of Agriculture to establish an advisory committee of food production organizations for a voluntary location-based program to brand and promote local food and agricultural products. 	Feb 6 – PH in S Ways Feb 14 – pass S Ways Feb 27 – Floor amend adopt; pass S 47y-0n Mar 1 – Ref to H Ag	Implements a recommendation of the Food Policy Forum. One strategy to support value added ag, assisting farm viability.
SSB 5353 HB 1421	Wagoner, Van De Wege	Concerning the voluntary stewardship program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reopens the opt-in period for VSP. Allows counties to opt-in by July 1, 2024. S Ag Amendment: Clarifies new VSP counties would need new funding.	Jan 13 – Ref to SAg Jan 26 – PH in SAg Feb 9 – Sub pass in SAg Feb 24 – Pass S Ways Mar 2 – Pass S 47y – 0n	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Testify <u>Position:</u> Support <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> The bill was amended in S Ag to address our concerns re new counties and new funding. SCC should consider supporting.
SB 5390	Shewmake, Warnick, Rolfes, Stanford	Establishing a programmatic safe harbor agreement on forestlands. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides for safe harbor under Federal ESA for forest landowners who enter into voluntary, incentive-based programs to protect northern spotted owl. 	Jan 26 – PH in SAg Feb 2 – Pass in SAg Feb 24 – Pass S Ways S Rules, 2 nd reading	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Reviewing to see if bill language would be useful in salmon riparian discussions to provide certainty for riparian landowners.
SB 5701	King	Expanding the definition of designated forestland. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adds to the state property tax statute the following phrase: “devoted primarily to preserving forest health, or providing wildfire resiliency” to the 	Feb 3 – Ref to S Ag	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> <u>Position:</u> <u>Comment/Impacts:</u>

		following definitions: “forestland”, “contiguous”, and “designated forestland”		
SSB 5709	Torres, Hunt, Schoesler	Concerning irrigation district elections.	Feb 6 – ES in S Ag; ref to S LGovt Feb 16 – sub pass in S LGovt Feb 17 – Ref to S Rules Feb 28 – pass S 47y-0n	<u>Track Only or Testify:</u> Track <u>Position:</u> none <u>Comment/Impacts:</u> Legis reaction to ID elections may be instructive for CD election issue.



Washington State Conservation Commission

March 16, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Chris Pettit, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Paige DeChambeau, Communications Director

SUBJECT: Communications Update – Conservation Month

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

Summary:

Updates from the Communications Department focusing on Conservation Month and other work being done by the department.

Requested Action:

None – information only.

Staff Contact:

Paige DeChambeau, Communications Director, 360-742-9488, pdechambeau@scc.wa.gov

Conservation Month

It's the first Conservation Month! The SCC communications team worked with the consulting firm Kauffman and Associates (KAI) out of Spokane to develop marketing materials for the first Conservation Month campaign that started in March 2023.

Campaign components and marketing materials:

The following list is assets developed by the SCC communications team and KAI. All of the physical assets below can be found online at www.scc.wa.gov/vote.

- **Communications plan** – KAI has worked with us to develop a multi-year communications plan.
- **Website** –The vote page is serving as a landing page to connect the public with their local conservation district.
- **Logos and flyers** – Developed in partnership with KAI and can be found on the vote page.
- **Radio Ads** – Two 30-second radio ads recorded in English and Spanish.

- **Social media ads** – We have a variety of ads that we are planning to run for six weeks. We started ads in mid-February, and they will run to the end of March, getting more and more targeted for those districts with elections toward the end of the month.
- **Social media toolkit** – For districts and other partners to help spread the word.
- **Conservation Month promotional items** – The communications team created an order form for districts, allowing each district to purchase \$250 worth of advertisement materials.

Advertising plan budget \$4,000

Facebook \$500 and iHeart Media \$3,500

These ads will run from Feb. 15 – March 31. The stations are KKZX FM, KQNT AM, and online streaming channels. Estimated total impressions of 1.4 million.

Social media statistics

Facebook

Impressions and post link clicks skyrocketed over the last couple of months. Attributing that to the Conservation Month ads.

- Impressions: 93,300 (535% increase compared to the previous two months)
- Engagements: 1,076 (5.3% decrease compared to the previous two months)
- Post Link Clicks: 478 (962% increase compared to the previous two months)
- New Page Likes: 21 (2.3% follower growth)

Instagram

Overall stats are looking good. Updated our profile link to scc.wa.gov/vote for the duration of March and direct people to our link in bio from election posts.

- Impressions: 3,081 (45.3% increase compared to the previous two months)
- Engagements: 285 (6.7% increase compared to the previous two months)
- Profile Actions: 8 (14.3% increase compared to the previous two months)
- New Follower Growth: 68 (55.3% follower growth)

LinkedIn

Growth across the board, and we aren't running ads here. We had/have a lot of room to grow on LinkedIn, but numbers steadily climbing.

- Impressions: 2,323 (89.3% increase compared to the previous two months)
- Engagements: 186 (124.1% increase compared to the previous two months)
- Post Clicks: 82 (203.7% increase compared to the previous two months)
- Follower Growth: 27 (39.1% follower growth)

Challenges

We became aware of several challenges as we worked on this project and will take them into account when we plan Conservation Month 2024:

- One of the challenges had to do with the timing of the materials. We finalized the consultant's materials much later than anticipated, which threw our ambitious timeline back.
- Another timing issue had to do with the mail-in elections and how early people needed to request their ballots. That timeline doesn't fall neatly within the March timeline and thus, advertising needs to start much earlier.

- The second issue related to timing was the fact that districts are only required to turn in their election forms a month before their election. This left us to gather all the information we wanted to share and turn it around so that voters could view it on our website and social media channels.
- The last setback we found was the availability of information on the district web pages. We want to be able to send voters to their district's webpage for election information, and sometimes that information wasn't available on the district's website.

Other Communications News

External Communications

- *State and federal work:* The team is working with our state and federal partners developing fly-in materials for the NACD March Fly-in event. We have also been publishing a weekly Legislative newsletter. If you aren't signed up, you can do so [here](#).
- *Newsletter survey:* We are looking at and trying to evaluate the work that we are doing with newsletters. We have put together a [survey to gather feedback here](#).
- *Photography contest:* We are excited to announce that in its tenth year, we will open the photography contest up to collect submittals all year. We are also updating the logos, which you can see [here](#).
- *Website:* We are going to continue working with August Creative to update some of the sections of our website, including the programs landing page, the district landing page, and creating an intranet for commissioners and staff. We plan to have all this work done before July 1, 2023.
- *Outreach:* We are also working on ordering native seed packets in bulk with some funding we have available to give seed packets out to districts to support pollinator health education and outreach efforts.

Internal communications and programs

- *VSP Website:* We have been working with August Creative also to develop a new, stand-alone website for the VSP program and we are very close to completion.
- *Internal communications:* Sarah has been working diligently to coordinate our strategic planning teams to update and finish filling out all the goals, objectives, and tactics of the [2022-2027 Strategic Plan](#). She will be presenting on the progress of that plan at our May commission meeting.
- *Grant Programs:* Helping with the RPPP launch, the Food Systems Support grant program, and SFF rollouts.

Next steps (if informational item):

Conservation Month work and updates to the agency's strategic plan are underway and we will have updates and reports on both projects for the May commission meeting.

March 16, 2023

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 in various district operations aspects, Commission operations assistance, and program administration support.

District Operations

Conservation district operations includes many aspects of operating legally and efficiently many of which are included as part of the Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (CAPP). The first report from RMs on CAPP will be provided at the May 2023 Commission meeting. Regional managers offer advice, resources, and assist with day-to-day operations matters including troubleshooting and problem solving when things do not go as planned in areas such as financial management, risk management, human resources, or board dynamics. This assistance is individualized for each district's needs at the same time as Regional Managers share a collective body of knowledge, resources, experience, and approaches as a team that provides service to districts.

Commission Operations & Program Administration

Regional Managers (RMs) have been working with a committee of conservation district staff to update the long range and annual plan of work templates. Updated templates will be available shortly. 2023 will be a transition year for this work so districts should not be worried if they are already working on annual plans of work or updating a long-range strategic plan; at this point either template may be used. RMs lead the administration of the Implementation, Natural Resource Investments, Professional Engineering, and Livestock Technical Assistance grants funding with conservation districts and are the regional points of contact for NRCS staff and conservation districts on task order development, issues resolution, and progress tracking.

At this point in time in our fiscal year and the biennium, RMs are working diligently to track the progress of many funded projects and to assist districts with returning funds, swapping out projects that fall through, and ensure that reporting requirements for various grants are on everyone's radar.

FY23 Supplemental Funding & SCC-CD Round Tables

Regional Managers have been participating in review of funding applications for Salmon Recovery Funding as well as assisting with follow up when questions arise from the review committee. Regional Managers have hosted eight Round Table meetings via Zoom with districts since the start of the fiscal year to provide updates and information, answer questions, and open dialogue. In the February Round Table meeting, NRCS State Conservationist, Roylene Comes at Night, joined the group to share important updates about Inflation Reduction Act opportunities coming to Washington. The March Round Table meeting is planned to include overviews of updated Natural Resource Investment programmatic guidelines, new Professional Engineering Grant guidelines, and key updates to the Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedures Manual.

Partnerships & Partnering Assistance

The Regional Manager 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, Building Better, WACD, DNR, NRCS, Ecology, NASCA, DFW, 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.

SCC participation and partnership with the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) is ongoing. Shana Joy is serving as President of the organization for 2023. She is also Chaired NASCA's Farm Bill Committee working with NASCA members nationwide to compile member feedback for the 2023 Farm Bill. [NASCA's Farm Bill Recommendations](#) are available online.

Planning for the WADE Conference in June of 2023 is underway. Jean Fike is coordinating with WADE, WACD, and RMs to pull together a Leadership track for this year's conference.

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. More information can be found online at: [Shrubsteppe Fire Preparedness, Response and Restoration](#). A WSRRI long-term strategy advisory group (LTSAG) and topical workgroups meet frequently to work on recommendations around long-term wildfire resiliency (habitat and human wildfire resiliency) in the shrubsteppe landscape with professional facilitators, finalizing the long-term strategy is planned for summer 2023. The Foster Creek, Lincoln County, Benton, Franklin, North Yakima, and Okanogan CDs are engaging in the LTSAG. On the ground projects are currently being implemented by Foster Creek,

Okanogan, and Lincoln County CDs, and a [second solicitation](#) was released on February 6. 2020-2022 burned areas with high wildlife value are prioritized, but all areas throughout the Columbia Plateau are eligible. A progress report was submitted to the legislature with more details about progress to date and investments so far, [read the report here](#).

Chehalis Basin

Josh Giuntoli, SW RM, represents the Executive Director of the Commission as ex-officio member of the Chehalis Basin Board (CBB). Over the next year, the CBB has dedicated a portion of each meeting to refining the Chehalis Basin Strategy and developing a process to support long-term decision making. A consultant is leading this effort. A 2022 Year in Review of the Chehalis Basin Strategy's accomplishments has been completed and is available on the Strategy website here: **2022 Annual Summary**. The CBB recently approved program guidelines for the erosion management program in the Chehalis Basin. The program has three objectives:

- Address urgent and imminent erosion threats to eligible structures and lands while also protecting and/or improving habitat conditions.
- Incentivize proactive projects that can address reach-scale erosion concerns for multiple landowners while also providing substantial habitat benefits.
- Provide technical assistance and resources to support basin jurisdictions to reduce future development of structures and infrastructure in erosion hazard areas.

Conservation districts continue developing projects, providing key outreach in support of the Chehalis Strategy, and Josh continues to coordinate every other month meetings of CDs and partners in the Chehalis.

Disaster Assistance Program

Jean Fike continues to work with Whatcom Conservation District and an advisory comprised of representatives from WASDA, Whatcom CD and Whatcom Family Farmers to award the second \$300,000 in recovery funding to farmers and ranchers who sustained losses in the atmospheric river flooding event of November 2021, approximately \$47,000 remains to be expended by June 30, 2023. The first \$300,000 was awarded in the final few months of FY 2022.

Wildfire Recovery

Mike Baden, Allisa Carlson, and Courtney Woods are administering the wildfire recovery grant program for FY23 and have awarded the full \$1.5 million for fire recovery work. 47 projects have been funded, including fires from the 2022 fire season. This is operating funding and we are in the second fiscal year; funds expire on June 30, 2023. We have been recently working to award projects that have been in the queue as funding is returned and funding becomes available. Districts will be working with landowners in the spring to complete the remainder of the projects.



Director's Bulletin

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

January/February 2023

As the days get a little longer, I get more excited about coming out of my winter hibernation and spending more time outside.

Fortunately, the first months of the year offer great opportunities to break away from 'cabin fever' by attending one of the regional sports show events around the state. Several hunting and fishing trade shows give outdoor enthusiasts the chance to check out the latest gear and gadgets, listen to 'how-to' seminars on fishing and hunting, and visit a variety of exhibitors that offer guide/charter services, equipment, merchandise, and more.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff hosted an informational booth at the [Tri-Cities Sportsmen's Show](#), the [Seattle Boat Show](#), the [Washington Sportsmen's Show](#) in Puyallup, the [Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's Show](#) in Portland, OR, and the [Central Washington Sportsmen Show](#) in Yakima. Several WDFW staff also held seminars about popular topics, including turkey hunting techniques, the [pikeminnow sport reward fishery program](#), Puget Sound fishing opportunities, and how to become a hunting mentor.

One more sports show is on the horizon, the [Big Horn Show](#) in Spokane happening March 16-19. We encourage you to stop by the WDFW booth to talk with staff and learn more about local fishing, hunting, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

As we move into spring, we will continue to ramp up our involvement in local communities to talk with people about responsible wildlife viewing and outdoor recreation, and how people can create wildlife [habitat at home](#). Already this year, we've attended a family STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) event at Yakima Valley College, [Bird Fest](#) in Burien, [Storming the Sound](#) in Anacortes, the [Spokane Great Outdoors & Bike Expo](#), and the [Environmental and Science Literacy Student Summit](#) in Tumwater.

You can find WDFW staff at other community events coming up, including the [Long Beach Razor Clam Festival](#) (April 8-9), the [Home and Garden Show in Chehalis](#) (April 14-15), the [Benton County Salmon Summit](#) (April 17-18), and the [Washington Coast Cleanup](#) on Earth Day (April 22). Check out our [events calendar](#) for more information.

Another popular spring activity coming soon is our youth fishing events. We are preparing rods and tackle now and will announce dates soon on the [WDFW website](#). These are great family events that introduce young people to fishing in a fun way that ensures success. Families are sure to go home with big smiles, great table fare, and wonderful memories, as well as information on how to continue fishing throughout the year.

Whether it's attending a community festival, family fishing event, or visiting a [WDFW wildlife area](#), we hope you find a way to connect with nature wherever you are. We look forward to seeing you enjoying a [#LifeOutdoors](#) in 2023!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kelly Sussewind". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kelly" and last name "Sussewind" clearly legible.

Kelly Sussewind, Director



WDFW staff and officers talk with attendees at the Central Washington Sportsmen Show.

Topics in this message include:

- [Op-Ed: Support funding for Washington's diverse wildlife](#)
- [WDFW seeks public input on draft co-manager hatchery policy](#)
- [Restoring Puget Sound estuaries and working to recover Stillaguamish Chinook](#)
- [Tips for wildlife viewing in Washington and ethical photography](#)
- [WDFW report calls for science-based approaches for climate-resilient water supply](#)
- [Surplus adult hatchery steelhead planted in coastal lakes open to fishing](#)
- [Submit your comments on 2023-2024 hunting regulations](#)
- [Monitoring the health of Washington's bighorn sheep herds](#)
- [Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative fire recovery resources](#)
- [Washington's waterfowl habitat improvement projects showing great results](#)
- [Innovative grassroots study helps remove mystery surrounding sea-run cutthroat trout](#)

Op-Ed: Support funding for Washington's diverse wildlife



Fish and Wildlife Commission Chair Barbara Baker and I [published an opinion editorial](#) in the Feb. 22 edition of The Seattle Times. As we lose wild lands, restoration of habitat is demanding more of our time and resources. We need new landscape approaches, such as the recent [shrubsteppe recovery program](#) and projects like the wildlife [crossings along I-90](#) that connect fragmented habitat, allowing wild animals to move freely. We need to conserve intact habitat and increase the rate of restoration of altered landscapes. We

submitted our highest priority for new funding – a [\\$47.6 million request to](#) conserve biodiversity. We now ask the Legislature and the public to support this funding so WDFW can advance our efforts to protect wildlife and wild places for all Washingtonians.

WDFW seeks public input on draft co-manager hatchery policy



WDFW is seeking public comment on a [draft policy to guide management of hatcheries](#) in cooperation with tribal co-managers. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted an updated Anadromous Salmon and Steelhead [Hatchery Policy](#) in April 2021. As part of that policy, the Commission instructed WDFW “to begin development of a joint policy agreement on salmon and steelhead hatchery programs with tribal co-managers,” which would supplement and supersede the existing Commission policy when appropriate. After more than a year of collaborative work with technical staff under the

direction of a subset of commissioners and tribal policymakers, a final draft policy was developed in November 2022 and presented to the full Commission in December 2022 and January 2023. The public is invited to [provide comment](#) on the draft policy through March 1. Learn more in our [news release](#).

Restoring Puget Sound estuaries and working to recover Stillaguamish Chinook



Juvenile Chinook salmon and other fish species depend on Puget Sound estuaries for shelter and food before heading out into more open waters. These rich feeding and rearing grounds allow fish to grow bigger, so they have a better chance of survival. Widespread reduction of estuary habitat during the last century has contributed significantly to salmon declines. To recover Chinook, we need to restore more of our region’s estuaries. Along with Native American tribes and many other partners, WDFW is working to restore estuary habitats on

lands we manage. A focus area for this work has been the Skagit, Stillaguamish, and Snohomish River deltas, which together make up the Whidbey Basin. [Learn more in our new blog post](#). We also recently published a 10-minute video, [Into the Stillaguamish](#), and [webpage](#) highlighting effort to advance habitat restoration and Chinook recovery in the Stillaguamish River.

Tips for wildlife viewing in Washington and ethical photography



Wildlife can be found anywhere in Washington. From backyard chickadees to the orcas of the Salish Sea, our state has a spectacular array of animal life to witness. In January we published a new [Wildlife Viewing webpage](#) to provide tips on places to go, responsible viewing practices, and more. A few winter and spring favorites include birding at WDFW Wildlife Areas, watching herds of elk at Oak Creek near Yakima, or spotting for gray and humpback whale spouts from the San Juans, Whidbey Island, and Strait of Juan de

Fuca. We also published a [blog on ethical wildlife photography](#). Wildlife photography is a growing hobby that is accessible to many. From the largest lenses to the phone in your pocket, wildlife photography is as complicated or simple as you want to make it. Whether someone is a novice or a professional, ethical practices should be used when documenting wildlife, respecting the animals as well as fellow visitors to our public lands and waters. The blog offers resources for photographers to brush up on their skills so they can capture that perfect (and ethical) shot.

WDFW report calls for science-based approaches for climate-resilient water supply



A new report recently [released](#) by WDFW calls for new strategies and policy tools to address consequences of increasing human demand for water and the effects of climate change on Washington's rivers and streams. [The paper](#) articulates the need to better predict future shifts in precipitation and the effect on streamflow, understand how groundwater and surface-water interact, and estimate how climate change and other stressors will affect salmon survival and water availability for people across the state.

Climate change is projected to result in widespread increases in winter streamflow, declines in summer streamflow, and increasing stream temperatures that will degrade habitat for many native aquatic species, especially cold water-adapted fish like salmon. Additionally, continued human population pressures will increase land-use change and habitat loss with unintended negative consequences for fish and wildlife.

Surplus adult hatchery steelhead planted in coastal lakes open to fishing



Surplus adult hatchery steelhead are providing a bonus opportunity for recreational anglers to catch fish in several year-round lakes along the coast and southwest Washington. WDFW hatchery staff have been hard at work stocking hundreds of these high-quality steelhead—averaging around 8 pounds—into Black, Cases, Snag and Western lakes in Pacific County; Kress Lake in Cowlitz County; Horseshoe Lake in Cowlitz County; and Fort Borst Park Pond, Inez (Vance Creek Pond 2) and Lake Sylvia. This is part of an ongoing effort to offer a chance to catch surplus hatchery steelhead without

impacts on wild fish. Learn more in [this blog post](#) and for fish plants, go to the [WDFW trout stocking webpage](#). For more information on what comes next for coastal steelhead fisheries, [see our January blog post](#).

Submit your comments on 2023-2024 hunting regulations



Make your voice heard! We are currently accepting written public comments on proposed rule changes to 2023-2024 hunting season regulations. Proposals in this round of rulemaking include those related to landowner hunting permits, deer and elk special permits; hunting seasons, areas, and permit quotas for moose, bighorn sheep and mountain goat; and hunting seasons and regulations for migratory gamebirds. We encourage everyone interested in the upcoming hunting seasons—regardless of race, color, sex, age, national origin, language

proficiency, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, status as a veteran, or basis of disability—to review the proposed changes and send us your feedback by the March 27 deadline. See our [news release](#) or visit the [WDFW website](#) for more information and to provide comments.

Monitoring the health of Washington's bighorn sheep herds



Surveys of bighorn sheep in various areas across the state took place in January and into early February this year. [This recent video](#) explains how capturing and collaring work and why we do this work. In Central Washington's Yakima Canyon, WDFW staff and volunteers worked to catch and collar [bighorn sheep](#) as part of a new study to monitor their health following past outbreaks of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*, the infection that triggers pneumonia in wild sheep herds, which can decimate bighorn populations.

In January, WDFW [issued new rules](#) prohibiting domestic sheep and goats in select areas of WDFW-managed lands to protect bighorn sheep. The adopted rule culminates a months-long process to develop and refine the rule, including a public comment period, public hearing, and a state environmental review.

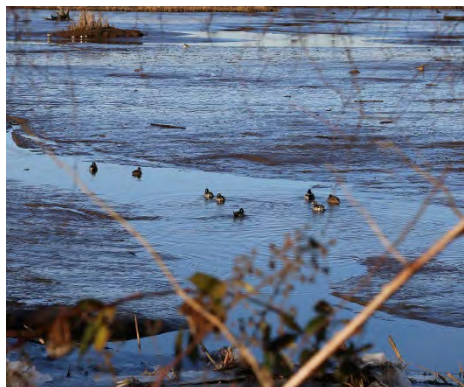
Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative fire recovery resources



Following historic fires in 2020 that burned 600,000 acres of [shrubsteppe habitat](#) in Washington, the Washington State Legislature made new funding available to benefit wildlife by restoring shrubsteppe habitat, implementing actions to help at-risk species, and supporting working lands in eastern Washington. The Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI) coordinates and delivers resources and services at a landscape scale to promote resilience for wildlife and communities. The initiative is the first large-

scale concerted effort by Washington state to channel resources immediately after wildfire to impacted shrubsteppe habitat. The initiative is now seeking proposals to benefit wildlife affected by wildfire on private, tribal, and public lands in eastern Washington. Learn more in our [news release](#).

Washington's waterfowl habitat improvement projects showing great results



Washington boasts world-class waterfowl habitat and some of the best duck and goose hunting in North America, from the pothole lakes of the Columbia Basin to the valleys and bayfronts of Puget Sound, to coastal estuaries and the entire Columbia River. Many waterfowling areas continue to get even better thanks in part to hunters who give back to the cause through the federal and state Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp programs; commonly known as “Duck Stamps”. [This blog post](#) details some of the projects that have been funded by Duck Stamp funds

and how other species outside of waterfowl have benefitted as well.

Innovative grassroots study helps remove mystery surrounding sea-run cutthroat trout



A new study by fishing community volunteers, a local conservation group and the WDFW on sea-run cutthroat trout was recently released, shedding new light about this fish that inhabits coastal and inner-marine waterways including Puget Sound and Hood Canal. Learn more [in our blog post](#). Coastal cutthroat trout are popular quarry for anglers in both nearshore marine waters and coastal streams from California to Alaska. The one-year study titled “Technology-Based Solutions Provide the First Estimate of Sea Lice Infections for Wild Coastal Cutthroat Trout” on the

American Fisheries Society [website](#) was a grassroots effort that received financial backing and on-the-water support from volunteers in the fishing community and local conservation groups, particularly the [Coastal Cutthroat Coalition](#).

Director's Bulletins are also [published on WDFW's Medium blog](#) and are archived on the Director's [webpage](#).

New NACD Staff

On February 20, NACD welcomed **Aimee Figgatt** as the new Stewardship and Education Coordinator. She is based in Charleston, WV and can be reached at aimee-figgatt@nacdnet.org.

Figgatt comes to NACD from the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) where she served as the Education and Outreach Specialist since 2016.

Recent NACD Activities

- NACD commented on BLM's solar development plan. Consisting of: incentivize renewable energy development on lands with the fewest resource concerns, including lands that are already impacted; Coordination with local stakeholders; Prioritization of areas identified in both local and federal solar energy development plans. Read the full comments in NACD's [newsroom](#).
- Pacific Region meeting was held on 3/7 under the tutelage of new regional chair Terri Preeg Riggsby Oregon's [West Multnomah district](#). The meeting was mostly introductions and review of NACD's issue papers for the fly-in. The region will be looking at work on updating the existing strategic plan at the next meeting. (Meetings are generally every two months on the first Tuesday of the month – *i.e.*, March, May, July, September, November).

NACD Fly-in March 22-23, 2023

- Links to the agenda, FAQs, advocacy training, five issue papers are [here](#).
- With much emphasis this session on the new Farm Bill, links to NACD's Farm Bill principles (40,000 foot view) and 2023 Farm Bill Recommendations (details on what NACD would like to see in the new Farm Bill) are [here](#).

Upcoming NACD Events (Watch [eResource](#) for announcements as more information becomes available).

1. The **2023 Summer Conservation Forum and Tour** will be held July 15-19, 2023, in Bismarck, North Dakota at the Bismarck Hotel and Conference Center; 800 South 3rd Street; Bismarck, ND 58504.
2. **2024 Annual Meeting** – February 10-14, San Diego, California.
3. **NACD Pacific Region** - Joint SW/Pacific NACD regions meeting will be August 22-24 at Lake Tahoe. Focus will be fuels and fires with tours on harvesting burnt trees, a new lumber mill, a biomass steam plant and how fuel thinning saved the Tahoe basin.

Information current as of 3/9/23 and provided by [Doug Rushton](#), WACD national director.

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Selected Notes

NACD Annual Meeting, February 11-15, 2023

New Orleans, LA

NOTE: These comments only include information from general sessions, NACD board and Pacific region meetings. Subscribe to [eResource](#) for more detailed information. Also, see Tom Salzer's Five Things to Know for February 17, 2023 for more information.

OVERVIEW

1,000 attendees from 55 territories and states (out of 58 possible). We had 33 Washington state attendees: NRCS, Conservation Commission and from district: Benton/Franklin, Foster Creek, North Yakima, Okanogan, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, Underwood, Iowa, and Thurston; and Columbia Basin virtually.

NACD LEADERSHIP

Michael Crowder Benton CD, is now the NACD past president.

Kim Lafleur (MA) is president (note: she is the first female president of NACD).

Gary Blair (MS) - first VP, Bill Simshauser (KS) - second VP, Mark Masters (GA) - secretary-treasurer.

Pacific Region - Mike Aguon (Guam) is the Pacific region executive board member; Terri Preeg Riggsby (OR) is the regional chair and vice chair is Kathrina Reyes (Guam).

2023 FARM BILL (FB)

Pelham Straughn, NACD lobbyist, gave an overview noting a bill may not pass in 2023. He noted Republicans want cuts and felt shut out of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). He felt Title 1 is targeted but urged NACD to be prepared for the process whether or not we get a FB. He urged flexibility in our [FB Principles](#) as the FB evolves.

NACD adopted (with a few changes) its NACD 2023 Farm Bill Requests. The FINAL version to be out shortly.

Chris Young, NACD government affairs lead, noted the new chair of the house agriculture committee is GT Thompson (PA) who is friendly to CDs. Young also noted there are many new members to be educated. NACD will soon have a list with contact information.

He anticipates no cuts in the FB but any cuts would likely be in the IRA because it was passed by the D's and the R's now have control.

FLY-IN

The NACD fly-in is scheduled for March 22nd, with the 23rd being an "overflow day". There will be a breakfast briefing on the 22nd and a reception that evening. There will virtual training sessions on March 7 and 9. Again, watch for more information in eResource.

In addition to the FB Principles, five fiscal year 2023 [issue papers](#) are prepared for the fly-in (so far): Appropriations; Forestry and Wildfire; Wildlife Management; Climate Change; and National Watershed Coalition Appropriations.

Emphasis will be educational as most members were not around for the last FB.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions adopted by NACD are assigned to standing committee. Those not adopted can be submitted next year. The NACD resolutions committee finalizes resolutions which is why they are different from our submittals.

Two of our Washington resolutions passed with NACD wording, originating from Skagit CD: 1)NACD supports streamlining eligibility determination processes for FSA and NRCS programs, and 2)NACD supports increasing federal ACEP-ALE cost-share assistance from 50% to 75%, including costs of necessary applicant expenses.

Two resolutions failed – exceptions to ACEP land eligibility requirements for easements was deemed too vague and contract fairness for NIPF was deemed to be already covered in NACD policy. (Both were from Skagit)

Review of FSA/NRCS program standards was withdrawn due to being already covered in NACD policy (Foster Creek) and “good faith contracts” was withdrawn due to work done since the WACD annual meeting (some work will continue with Whitman on some unresolved instances). These withdrawals were done in consultation with the initiating districts.

NACD POLICIES and BY-LAWS

NACD has been updating and streamlining its policies and by-laws. Some of the results, among others, are:

1. There are now three standing committees (formerly called foundation committees): natural resources, legislative, and partners.
2. The former “resource policy groups – RPGs” are now call subcommittees. Non-supervisors can be on subcommittees.

The committees and subcommittees will be populated overtime at the discretion of NACD president LaFleur. She intends to establish the standing committees first.

RECOGNITION

Larry Davis (Whatcom) was recognized with NACD President’s Award for accomplishments with upgrading the By-laws and policies, as well as chairing the Tribal resource policy group.

Wade Troutman (Foster Creek) received the Olin Sims Conservation Leadership award for private lands conservation – many innovative local and federal programs over many years as well as serving on many NACD groups, and mentoring many (that’s a capital “M” on mentoring).

GENERAL

- NRCS **Chief Cosby** highlighted locally led, voluntary, science-based, and partnerships. Others want to be at the table- how do we bring the in?
- NACD recognized as an affiliate the new Association of Conservation Executive Directors (ACED).
- NACD’s strategic plan for 2023-2025 was approved.
- NACD is in good shape financially. Overall revenue over the past five years has gone from \$19.5 million to \$29.9 million (includes pass-through).
- NACD membership has declined by about one hundred nationally over the past five years.
- **North Yakima CD and WACD** were recognized as NACD PLATINUM members.
- Ducks Unlimited film – *Wings over Water* – about Northern Plains potholes, habitat, and opportunities caught in amazing movie action.
- Our WA auction item of WA Products (Thank you Larry Davis for coordinating) brought in \$550.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 22-23, 2023	NACD Fly-in	Washington, DC
July 15-18, 2023	Summer Conservation Forum and Tour	Bismarck, ND
August 22-24, 2023	Pacific/SW Regions Joint Meeting (information not yet posted)	Tahoe
February 10-14, 2024	NACD 2024 Annual Meeting	San Diego, CA

Provided by WACD National Director [Doug Rushton](#). L:\NACD\2023\Annual Meeting - New Orleans\Misc\2023 NACD Annual Mtg NOLA Summary Notes CDR.docx



WASHINGTON

Partner Activity Report

Natural Resources Conservation Service - Washington

March 2023

We need you, our Partners, to accomplish this

By Roylene Comes At Night
NRCS-WA State Conservationist

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. —

We, the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington, need you, our Partners and Tribes, to help install more than \$68 million in conservation through EQIP, and \$56 million in conservation through CSP. This Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding is above and beyond the funding we receive through the Farm Bill, and all of it must be completely paid out by Sept. 2031.

I'll be direct, as exciting, and amazing and incredible as this once-in-a-generation opportunity is for all of us, yet this will be a heavy lift. We'll be able to help farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners achieve levels of conservation that have yet to be seen here. Our work with this funding will help Washington make significant strides toward addressing climate change through conservation planning and implementation, carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy, and soil health.

What can you all do to

help? There are three primary areas we need you. First, we need you to help us spread the word on our programs and funding opportunities. Second, we need your help to increase the number of applications we receive. Third, we need staff. Lots of staff, and there are many opportunities where you can help us with contracted staffing.

Another way we need you is through helping us spread the word. We recently announced a new application batching period for the IRA funds (both EQIP and CSP) for Fiscal Year 2023. All eligible applications received by March 31, 2023 will be batched and then ranked for FY23 funding. Please, share this far and wide! We need as many people to apply as possible because even if folks are not awarded a contract this year, their likelihood of being awarded one will increase as the availability of funds increase.

We need you to help folks apply for our programs. We know this isn't as simple as it sounds. It takes a bit of advocacy, and trust-building. We know many producers across the state may not be interested in working voluntarily with a government

agency, especially through the bindings of a contract. Some people don't even know about us. We are completely voluntary and non-regulatory. We sincerely want to help people help their land, and we've been empowered with an enormous amount of funding to do it.

Finally, many of these positions will be directly tied to IRA and will be temporary in nature. While we're going to work tirelessly to address our staffing challenges through the federal hiring process, it simply will not be enough. We need to look for new, innovative, ways to address these challenges. A few associations have expressed interest in partnering with us to enhance staffing capacity to help us achieve our mutual goals though contracting and agreements: We're all about that! If you have any other ideas, please bring them to our attention.

Basically, we need you, and I look forward to working even more closely together to do this. Not only to help our producers create value and economic opportunity, but to help us address climate change and save our natural resources for future generations to enjoy.



Conservationist Updates



West Area

By David Rose

West Area Conservationist

Staff Actions:

- We are working to fill the following vacancies: Resource Conservationist (RC) positions in Port Angeles, Montesano and Puyallup, Soil Conservationist (SC) positions in Everson and Vancouver.
- We have made selections for the Area Cultural Resources Specialist (CRS) in Olympia, Area Program Specialist (APS) in Olympia, SC positions in Renton and Puyallup. All names will be shared once they've arrived.
- New employees in the area include Sean McDonagh (RC in Bremerton), Heidi Lumpkin (RC in South Bend), Eun Lee (Area Administrative Coordinator), and Lynn Khuat (Puget Sound Team DC).
- Sarah Tanuvasa, Northwest Team DC, is back from her basic and advanced training with the Air Force. We are very proud of her commitment to serve her country and glad to have her back.
- Wyatt Wood has begun work as a Biologist in the Area Office through an agreement with Pheasants Forever.

Program Update:

The final FY22 Financial Assistance Programs tally for the West Area shows the following: EQIP - 116 contracts for over \$4.1 million, CSP - 19 contracts for over \$773 thousand, RCPP - 20 contracts for over \$709 thousand.

Initial estimates for the FY23 Financial Assistance Programs for the West Area are not set yet, as the preapprovals have not been completed. However, initial indications are that we have approximately 20% more applications than last year.

Central Area

By Austin Shero

Central Area Conservationist

NRCS is entering into a new era with the addition of the Inflation Reduction Act. This new period will only continue to strengthen our relationships with key partners across the state, and with partners in the Central Area. We're excited for these opportunities, but know we can't accomplish this task alone. We will be walking this road with our fantastic partners, side by side, to accomplish critical resource concerns across the area!

The NRCS Central Area is moving into pre-approving Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract obligations for Fiscal Year 2023. These contracts will be obligated in the next couple of months. We're proud to fund this high quality conservation, and even more excited to see this conservation on the ground! Central Area is utilizing a wide variety of other funding opportunities in FY23, including three new RCPP agreements, WaterSmart Initiative, and Conservation Stewardship Program opportunities. Conservation Stewardship Program applications will be funded in the next two months and will then work toward obligation.

Partners and agencies continue to expand their



efforts in the Odessa Aquifer area. This project is getting a lot of exposure nationally, and has an immense amount of momentum. This group has already successfully paired EQIP with RCPP, and has future plans of adding PL566 and WaterSmart to the overall project scope. It is truly innovative and hitting the targeted resource concerns.

Program year 2023 will be an exciting year, and looking forward we have unique opportunities. Thank you for each of your efforts, and relationships with NRCS and our local staff.

East Area

By Aubrey Hoxie

East Area Conservationist

East Area welcomes our recently hired engineer for the area, who will be located in Pasco; his name is Paul Smith. He comes to us from NRCS Oregon, where he spent the last two years working on livestock and irrigation type designs.

We're looking forward to adding to the East Area this year with the following positions:

- Area Agronomist
- Area Range Specialist
- Civil Engineer Technician in Colville FO
- Soil Conservationists in Colfax, Spokane Valley, Ritzville, Pasco, ClarkstonRange Management specialist in Colville and Ritzville FO
- Resource Conservationist in Dayton FO

*Join
our
team*

ECOSCI Planning on IRA?

By Robert D. Evans

NRCS-WA State Resource Conservationist

Everyone is eagerly anticipating the advent of IRA funds. It's a lot of hurry up and just a little bit of wait. What you may be thinking is, "how can NRCS partners prepare?" Well, the answers to this may vary, however I believe one common thread will be training and systems access.

You may already be familiar with AgLearn, started the path to NRCS Planner Certification, or even thought about a LincPass. A lot has changed in the past 10 years at NRCS; the next 10 will be radically different as well. NRCS-WA will be seeking new and bigger partnerships on an unprecedented scale. Different positions will have different needs, accordingly. The right level of access is important to consider, as they carry different training, obligations, and costs to the agency.

AgLearn can be obtained without a LincPass. This is a great option for positions that will handle Personally Identifiable Information (PII), but not require access to the NRCS network. It is very important to note that while it is easy to do, multiple AgLearn accounts should not be created per individual! AgLearn is the preferred method of administration of the Information Security Awareness Training (ISAT) which is required for anyone who will be handling PII, however it offers much more.

The US Department of Agriculture was monikered "the People's Department" by its creator, Abraham Lincoln; "LincPass" is a nod to him (and flows better than "[HSPD-12](#) compliant PIV card"). In brief, a LincPass is an secure ID card that allows access to federally controlled facilities and networks. Essentially, the LincPass is critical for NRCS staff and their partners who wish to do conservation planning and administration of Farm Bill and IRA funds, through systems such as [Conservation Desktop \(CD\)](#) and

[Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool \(CART\)](#). An AgLearn account is generated for every LincPass as well.

AgLearn is essential to obtaining NRCS Planner Certification designations ([GM180 Part 409](#)). There are four designations, but I'll focus on the two primary designations for planning: [Level I](#) (formerly 'Apprentice') and [Level III](#) (formerly 'Certified').

Level I provides an excellent foundation for planners new to NRCS; these are the fundamental concepts which are critical to comprehend before pursuing advanced designations. Level I trainings are primarily administered through self-paced AgLearn trainings. Though partners were allowed to bypass CD & CART training under outdated NRCS policy, that policy no longer stands; CD and CART are systems central to conservation planning.

Level III requires Level I certification to achieve, in fact many courses in Level I are prerequisites for in-person trainings required for Level III certification, such as Conservation Planning 2 (CP2) and Cultural Resources 2. Planners who achieve Level III certification can sign Line 'O' on the CPA-52 (NEPA) as well as sign Conservation Plans (provided they have appropriate Job Approval Authority).

Those with a LincPass are required to authenticate with it every few weeks. If not, they will lose their access and need to go through a time consuming process to reactivate it. LincPass is the key for access to federally controlled buildings and networks; inactivation due to inactivity is a security feature to ensure that cards are not mishandled or misplaced. AgLearn is a bit more forgiving, the ISSA training must be completed annually to maintain access.

Conservation District Staff, please route all requests through [Jan Thomas](#), WSCC CTD

Partners interested in obtaining AgLearn permissions should contact [Russ Sego](#), NRCS-WA.

Partners interested in LincPass should contact [Kathleen Dickerson](#), NRCS-WA



Management & Strategy

NRCS Washington Hiring Actions

Chas Scriptor

Assitant State Conservationist-M&S

As of Jan. 31, 2023, during FY23 NRCS-WA has filled **14** positions. **Nine** of those positions were backfills and **five** are new positions. Currently, there are **133** positions identified to be filled with **88** being new positions and **58** are refills. Additional positions are currently being identified and prioritized to be filled via contracts, agreements or permanent hires based on recently announced staffing levels allowed by the Inflation Reduction Act funding (IRA). The IRA will provide funding for projects and positions related to Urban Agriculture, Watershed Planning and Climate.

Positions Filled in FY23 as of Jan. 31, 2023	Location
Administrative Assistant	Olympia
Administrative Assistant	Spokane
Administrative Assistant	Spokane
Civil Engineer	Pasco
Cultural Resources Specialist Archeologist - State	Spokane SO
District Conservationist	Ephrata
District Conservationist	Puyallup
Program Specialist (Easements)	Spokane
Public Affairs Specialist	Spokane
Resource Conservationist	Waterville
Resource Conservationist	Wenatchee
Resource Conservationist	Wenatchee
Soil Conservationist	Davenport
Urban Team (Soil Conservationist Urban Conservationist)	Olympia



Management & Strategy (Cont.)

Hiring Actions Currently in Process as of Jan. 31, 2023	Location		
Admin Prog Spec (HR Specialist)	Spokane	Pathways Soil Conservationist	Olympia
Administrative Assistant	Ephrata	Pathways Soil Conservationist	Pasco
Administrative Assistant	Spokane	Pathways Soil Conservationist	Ritzville
Area Agronomist	Ephrata	Pathways Soil Conservationist	Yakima
Area Agronomist	Spokane	Program Support Assistant	Colville
Area Civil Engineering Technician (CET)	Ephrata	Program Support Assistant	Davenport
Wenatchee	Colville	Program Support Assistant	Ephrata
Ellensburg	Colville	Program Support Assistant	Puyallup
Area CET	Olympia	Program Support Assistant	Yakima
Area CET	Spokane	Rangeland Mgmt Specialist	Colville
Area Easement positions	Ephrata	Rangeland Mgmt Specialist	Republic
Yakima	Davenport	Rangeland Mgmt Specialist	Ritzville
Ellensburg	Davenport	RCPP Coordinator	Ephrata Ellensburg Wenatchee Yakima
Area Program Specialist	Olympia	Realty Specialist	Spokane
Area Range Specialist	Spokane	Resource Conservationist	Dayton
CET	Chehalis	Resource Conservationist	Ephrata
CET / ENG	Colville	Resource Conservationist	Montesano
CET / ENG	Ephrata	Resource Conservationist	Olympia
Cultural Resources Specialist	Ephrata	Resource Conservationist	Port Angeles
Wenatchee	Ephrata	Resource Conservationist	Puyallup
Ellensburg	Ephrata	Resource Conservationist	Renton
Cultural Resources Specialist	Olympia	Soil Conservationist	Clarkston
Cultural Resources Specialist	Spokane	Soil Conservationist	Colfax
Engineer	Ephrata or Yakima	Soil Conservationist	Colfax
Engineer	Spokane	Soil Conservationist	Davenport
Engineer	Mt Vernon	Soil Conservationist	Ephrata
Forester	Colville	Soil Conservationist	Ephrata
Forester	Ellensburg	Soil Conservationist	Ephrata
Forester	Spokane	Soil Conservationist	Okanogan
Management Analyst /	Olympia	Soil Conservationist	Pasco
Grants and Agreements Specialist	Spokane	Soil Conservationist	Port Angeles
Pathways Recent Grad Soil Conservationist	Colfax	Soil Conservationist	Prosser
Pathways Engineer	Ephrata	Soil Conservationist	Puyallup
Pathways Engineer	Spokane Valley	Soil Conservationist	Puyallup
Pathways Engineer	Wenatchee	Soil Conservationist	Renton
Pathways (Natural Resources)	Puyallup	Soil Conservationist	Ritzville
Pathways Soil Conservationist	Chehalis	Soil Conservationist	Spokane Valley
Pathways Soil Conservationist	Davenport	Soil Conservationist	Spokane Valley
Pathways Soil Conservationist	Lake Stevens	Soil Conservationist	Vancouver
Pathways Soil Conservationist	Mt Vernon	Soil Conservationist	Waterville
Pathways Soil Conservationist	Okanogan	Soil Conservation Technician	Colfax
		Soil Conservation Technician	Waterville
		State Irrigation Engineer	Spokane



Engineering

PL-566: Small Watershed Program Activities

Larry Johnson

State Conservation Engineer

Congressional Directed Spending (CDS)

Clallam County received Congressional Directed Spending (Earmark) for the Dungeness Off-Channel Reservoir. Additional details are being collected from the County and NRCS National Headquarters. Preliminary communication indicate that the County requested an appropriation from Senator Patty Murray's office in the amount of \$2,728,000 for piping the main Highland Irrigation District irrigation ditch for the Dungeness Off-channel Reservoir project. We will provide additional details as we learn more.

Odessa Groundwater Aquifer Replacement Project

On behalf of NRCS, a contract was awarded by the Columbia Basin Conservation District (CBCD) to the Farmers Conservation Alliance (FCA). The FCA will be facilitating NRCS adoption of the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) Odessa Subarea Special Study (OSSS) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and developing the watershed plan for the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Project. A detailed schedule has been prepared and it is anticipated that the EIS adoption and Watershed Plan will be completed sometime over the next couple of years. Once both activities have been completed NRCS will be able to request funding to implement the project outlined in the watershed plan. The project work will mirror the work already described in the USBR OSSS EIS which includes, irrigation water pump plants, pipeline laterals and bridges. More details can be found at: [Odessa Subarea Special Study, CPN Region \(usbr.gov\)](https://www.usbr.gov/odessa)



Clallam County Off Channel Reservoir

Clallam County is still considering initiating a request for watershed planning assistance. NRCS will host a meeting with the County to discuss the

CDS that we have received and their commitment as a Watershed Project Sponsor. NRCS anticipates that the County will decide if they want to be a Sponsor by this summer.

City of Brewster

FEMA has been working with the City of Brewster to developing new floodway zones through the City. The City is very interested to know if the Small Watershed Program can help them address the flood impacts that have been identified through the FEMA model. NRCS has completed initial screening the of project needs and have concluded that the project needs fall well within scope of the Small Watershed Program. NRCS has developed a Statement of Work (SOW) to complete a Preliminary Investigation Feasibility Report (PIFR) and have requested funding to complete a PIFR for the City or Brewster. The PIFR will be used to determine overall program eligibility for the Small Watershed Program.

Small Watershed Program Inquiries

WA NRCS continues to receive Small Watershed Program inquiries from a variety of governmental entities seeking funding opportunities for flood control, stream restoration, water quantity/quality and more.

For each inquiry the following overarching steps are completed by NRCS:

1. Project Inquiry is received.
2. WA NRCS prescreens the project for general program eligibility.
3. If there is an eligible and interested project sponsor and the project needs fit one of the eligible program purposes, a PIFR is completed to identify any potential barriers that could prevent the watershed plan to be successfully completed.
4. If there are no significant barriers, the Sponsor(s) can request watershed funding from the State Conservationist to develop a watershed plan.
5. Once the watershed plan is completed and approved, implementation funds can be requested.

Partnerships Washington Local Work Groups

By Nick Vira

State Partnership Liason

NRCS has released guidance to staff and partners on the Local Work Group (LWG) process for fiscal year 2023 and recently LWG Chairs, NRCS staff and partners attended a remote LWG kickoff meeting. This year LWGs are to be held by June 23, 2023.

In Washington, LWGs are held by NRCS team boundaries, all of which are multicounty. There are ten team LWGs and one Tribal LWG. LWGs are chaired by a Conservation District representative who leads the meeting discussion, along with an optional facilitator and NRCS District Conservationist.

LWG membership is open to the public and should be diverse and representative of the community representing a variety of agricultural and natural resource interests. Membership should represent different crop and livestock types in the area, and include non-industrial foresters, representatives from agriculture or environmental organizations, Tribes, Federal, State or local government agencies, elected officials, and others with interests and backgrounds in natural resource conservation. Across the state, many organizations and individuals continue to express interest in participating in LWGs. To facilitate participation, Washington NRCS will post the schedule for all LWG meetings on the Washington NRCS web site. With the 2008 Farm Bill, the LWG membership

has been expanded to include anyone who requests membership and is deemed to have knowledge of local resource concerns.

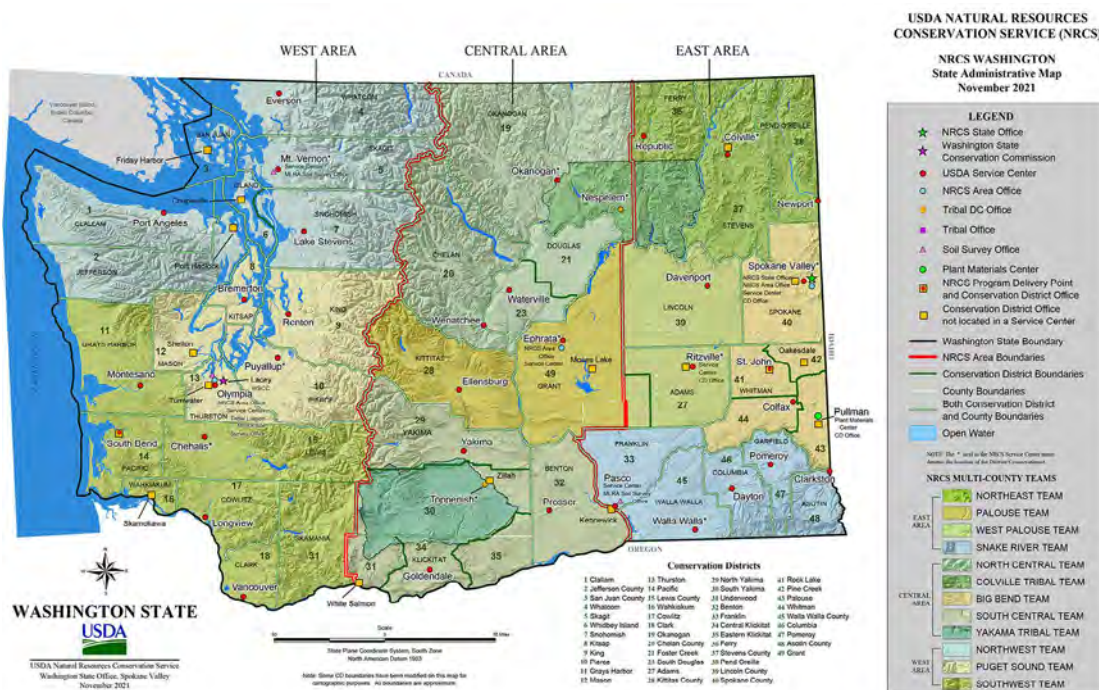
LWG input and recommendations may assist NRCS in identifying the following conditions:

- Identifying significant local and statewide geographic areas of concerns;
- Identifying significant local and statewide natural resource concerns;
- Technical programmatic recommendations;
- Need for statewide public information and outreach campaigns;
- Guidelines for developing ranking criteria for evaluating applications;
- Guidance on eligible conservation practices;
- Technical guidance on conservation practices, including new, innovative practices;

- Identifying, monitoring and analyzing performance indicators;
- Evaluating and reporting program impacts on natural resources and the environment; and
- Coordinating with other federal, state, tribal, and local public and private activities;

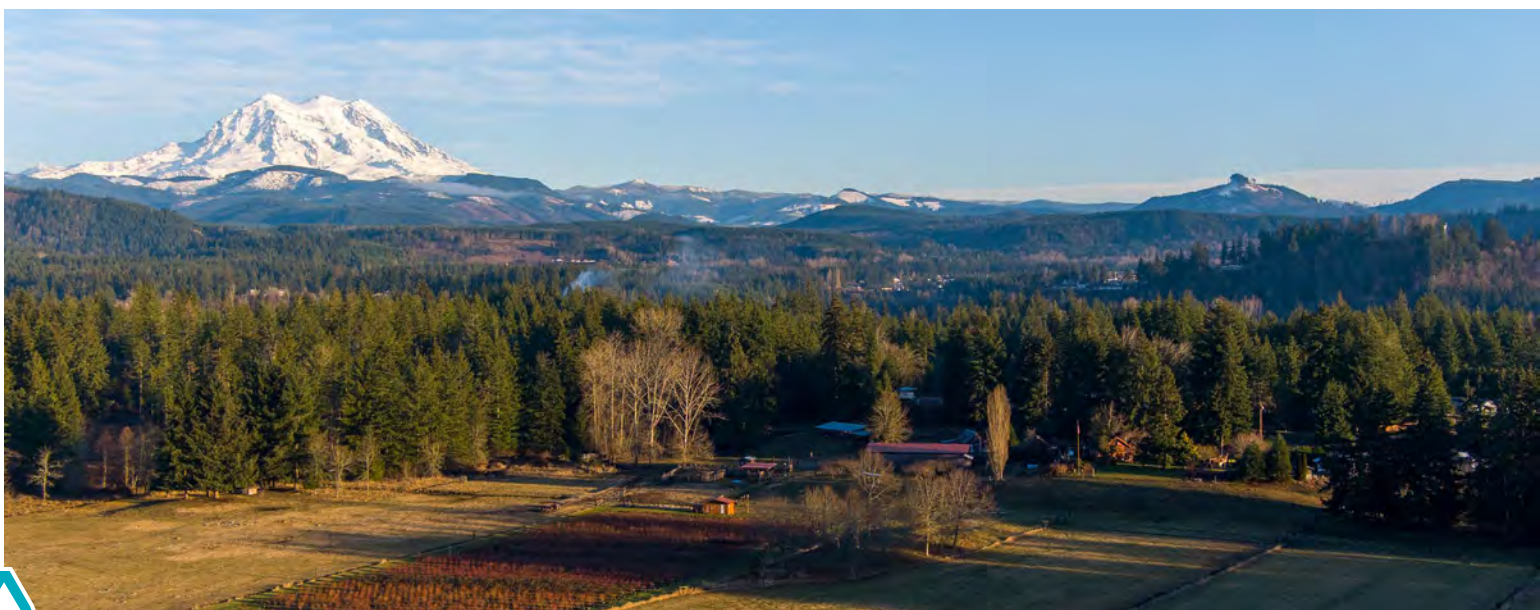
This year NRCS will also offer LWGs with the opportunity to submit optional EQIP and/or CSP project proposals in areas that align with Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) eligible climate change effort categories. Project proposals will target specific climate change resource concerns, in designated geographic areas, with specific suits of eligible conservation practices. Additional information and guidance on this process will be developed and distributed to LWGs.

For more information visit our [Washington Local Working Group webpage](https://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/washington-local-working-group).



Programs

Program	Allocation	Apps	Contracts	Obligation/ Awards	Notes
CSP Renewal FY23	\$3,750,000	61			
CSP Classic	\$12,000,000	186			
CSP Sage Grouse	\$1,500,000				State announcement
EQIP Classic	\$26,306,400	814			
EQIP CIC	\$842,400	32			
ACEP-ALE	\$2,624,546	3			
ACEP-WRE	\$463,838	3			
RCPP-EQIP	NA	15			
RCPP-CSP	NA	9			
RCPP-ACEP-ALE	NA	0			
FY23 RCPP proposals	NA	0			
IRA-CSP	\$5,395,243				Announcement 2/24/2023, open for 30 days
IRA-EQIP	\$2,207,419				Announcement 2/24/2023, open for 30 days



Public Affairs

Let's work together to best support Washington!

By Nate Gallahan

State Public Affairs Specialist

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. — We recently announced the application batching period for the Inflation Reduction Act funding for FY23 (for both CSP and EQIP). All eligible applications received by March 31, 2023 will be batched and then ranked for FY23 funding.

This funding for NRCS-Washington includes an additional **\$2.2 million for IRA-EQIP** and an additional **\$5.4 million for IRA-CSP**. Now, we need help to spread the word! We recently published the news releases on our website (wa.nrcs.usda.gov) and through GovDelivery. If you are not receiving our GovDelivery press releases, please signup via the webform at the very bottom of our website. Once you setup your email and password, you'll see "Washington" within the giant list of topics. Select the ones you're interested in, and voilà! You're in.

We're also working hard to increase our presence at natural resource-related events across the state to help us raise awareness of our programs and opportunities. We're busy building our organizational knowledge base of everything happening but could really use your help here too. If you are at any event that you think we should be at, but are not, could you please shoot me an email at nathan.gallahan@usda.gov? While we attended 41 events in FY22, we know there are many more. We're looking for those local events, that are more personal and more meaningful to building trust-based relationships with producers across the state.

We are especially interested in building bridges and relationships with historically underserved communities! We found four events specifically designed to supporting members of those communities last year and have a few on our calendar for FY23 too. But we know there are more out there. If we work together and share information, we will all be better able to support these incredibly important communities. If you agree, please shoot me an email and lets start talking!



Tribal

The Native American Farm Bill Coalition and the Inter-Tribal Agriculture Council

By Robin Slate

State Tribal Liason

Efforts continue with outreach on the writing of the new Farm Bill via webinars and meetings: Home | Native Farm Bill Coalition | Washington, DC. They are also coordinating fly-ins for each region of the country:

The Native Farm Bill Coalition is holding a series of fly-ins to Washington, D.C. for Tribal leaders and Native producers to meet directly with members of Congress, their staff, and the Biden Administration. The dates for 2023 Farm Bill fly-ins are as follows (info for NW Tribes only):

- March 7-9 – Western and Pacific Tribes (confirmed)
- April 18-20 – Northwest Tribes (tentative)
- May 9-10 – Indian Country in conjunction with the Native American Food Fair (tentative)

Inter-Tribal Ag Council annual conference

In December 2022, NRCS had more than 125 staff, State Conservationists, Regional Conservationists, and National leaders including Chief Cosby attend the Inter-Tribal Ag Council annual meeting in Nevada. This is the largest number of NRCS staff ever approved to attend. It really supports our agency's commitment to working with Tribes.

NRCS also held training for the staff that was separate from the annual meeting agenda. NRCS leadership also spoke to those staff about all the good work NRCS is doing with Tribes.



Mid - Winter ATNI conference, Portland OR

USDA had representatives from Oregon and Washington USDA, including RD, FSA, APHIS, and NRCS, and USFS, attend the ATNI conference in Portland, Oregon in January. Agencies presented to the Natural Resources Committee. Thanks to all the USDA staff that attended the entire weeklong conference. And a special thanks to the Oregon FSA and NRCS staff that had booths at the exhibit hall. Because of your sponsorships we are increasing the visibility of our agency and all the great things we can do when working with Tribes.



Riparian Buffer program

NRCS has presented to Tribes, partners and Washington state legislature on the new Riparian Buffer program that was just announced. This program will provide incentive payments to landowners/operators to take land out of production to install functioning riparian buffers. This has been a long term goal of the agency and is now a reality. Ultimately, we hope this will assist us in the effort to improve and restore fish habitat.

Working Effectively With American Indians training (WEWAI)

NRCS is finalizing the details for the WEWAI training for the week of May 15th. The host Tribe is the Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Reservation. Conservation District staff and NRCS staff are enrolled to attend.

Climate Smart Ag project

The Yakama nation is pleased to be moving forward with the Forterra application for the climate smart program.

Listening Circle

The small team of NRCS Tribal liaisons across the country will be starting the Listening Circle events again in March. This upcoming session will be about CEMA, TEK, NACD technical funding and more. These sessions are for NRCS and other USDA agencies field staff that work with Tribes.

NRCS News

NRCS-WA increases outreach and contracts to Historically Underserved in FY2022

By Kristoffer Mills

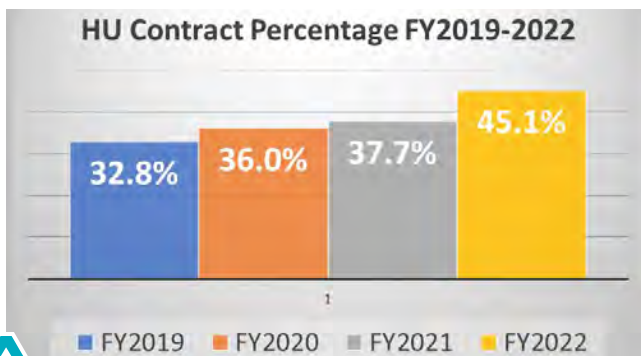
State Outreach Coordinator

Spokane Valley, Wash.

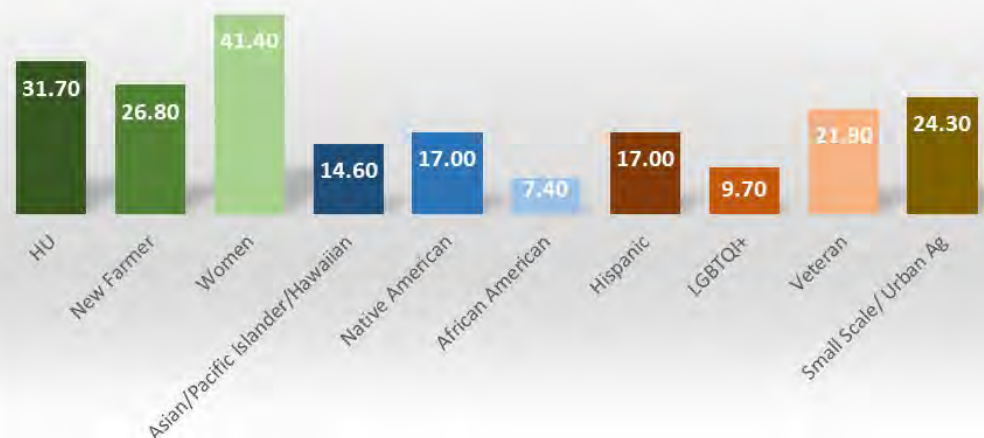
NRCS-WA continues to make tremendous progress in demonstrating agency commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through both program participation and outreach. The FY2022 data for obligated contracts and staff engagement at outreach events reflects our commitment to ultimately delivering conservation to underserved communities.

According to Dashboard data, our Historically Underserved (HU) obligated contract rate has continually increased from FY2019 through FY2022. The HU contracts have consistently increased each fiscal year by both the total number of contracts, and the overall percentage of contracts. Overall HU contracts increased from 126 in FY2019, 134 in FY2020, 166 in FY2021, to 187 in FY2022.

In fiscal year 2022, staff participated in 41 outreach events,



Percentage of Staff Engagements with Underserved Communities FY2022



with approximately 930,000 attendees. Of the 41 events, four events were specific to Native Americans, four were specific to Veterans, and one was specific to LGBTQI+ communities. Data collected from staff surveys following outreach events was used to determine the levels of staff engagement with underserved communities. Staff engagement rates with underserved communities ranged from 7.40% to 41.40%. NRCS staff interaction with Women was the highest with engagements during 41.80% of events, and the lowest interactions were

with African Americans during 7.40% of events.

For the first quarter of this fiscal year data from 11 outreach events reflects that engagement rates ranged from 9.10% (Native American) to 90.90% (Women). The data also shows that staff engaged with African Americans during 27.30% of the events, which is a significant increase from the previous year. In fact, engagement rates for all categories of underserved communities continues to increase two and three-fold. More outreach opportunities continue to be identified and added to the state outreach calendar, to include events specific to underserved communities.

Update to Historically Underserved Contracts and Outreach to Underserved Communities in FY22

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service is making available \$850 million in fiscal year 2023 for its oversubscribed conservation programs: the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). For more information on how to apply, [click here](#).

USDA Unveils Strategic Approach and New Investments for Addressing Water Supply Challenges for Producers in the West

USDA is announcing major investments and strategies to conserve water, address climate change and build drought resilience in the West, supported in part by funding from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

The Western Water and Working Lands Framework for Conservation Action is a comprehensive, multi-state strategy to address key water and land management challenges across 17 Western States. Guided by this new framework, the WaterSMART Initiative will invest \$25 million in three new priority areas and 37 existing priority areas, assisting communities and producers in the West.

One of the three priorities areas include the Quincy Columbia Basin Irrigation District West Canal Area in Washington, with a funding amount of \$1.8 million.

[Read more here.](#)

February Water Supply Outlook Report for Washington

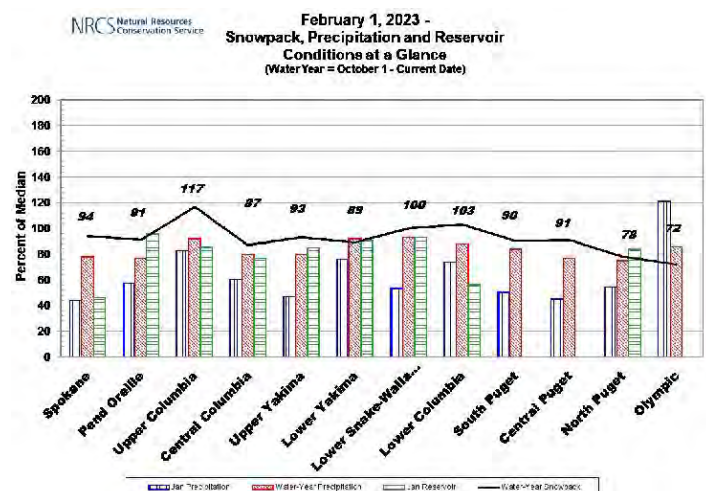
By Scott Pattee

Water Supply Specialist, Washington Snow Survey Office

After the very encouraging snowstorms in December, January flat lined, receiving only 63% of normal total mountain precipitation for the month. The state received several resuscitative events that represented hope. However most carried little precipitation with warm temperatures that hampered true to normal snow accumulations. Fortunately, most of these events were followed by cold snaps, locking the moisture into the snowpack, a benefit to spring runoff. As recreationists look to the next couple of months to help prolong the season with fresh powder, water managers are hoping to continue to build the snow water content for downstream use later in the year.

The most recent forecast through late-February shows a probability for below normal temperatures and slightly above normal precipitation. NWS 3-month (February, March, and April) forecast indicates below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation which is indicative of the forecasted Enso La Nina #3. The US Drought Monitor continues to show improvement each month with only a trace of DO which stretches from the central part of the state up through and over the northern tier.

More information on the Washington Snow Survey & Water Supply Program is [available here](#) and the full February report is available, directly, [here](#).



NRCS-WA announces FY'23 CSP Sage Grouse Initiative deadline

Application Deadline: March 15th, 2023

FSA Eligibility Deadline: April 1st, 2023

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash.

– The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Washington announced March 15, 2023, as the application deadline for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Sage Grouse Initiative for Fiscal Year 2023.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Sage Grouse Initiative is for producers who are passionate about conservation and environmental stewardship and offers technical and financial assistance to help them take their conservation efforts to the next level. Applicants will need to operate land within the Working Lands for Wildlife Sage Grouse Initiative Project Boundaries.

Through CSP Sage Grouse Initiative, agricultural producers earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, ecologically-based pest management, buffer strips, and pollinator and beneficial insect habitat – all while maintaining active agricultural on their land. CSP Sage Grouse Initiative also encourages the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and new management techniques such as precision agriculture applications, improved grazing systems,



wildlife habitat improvement, and install and/or improve riparian buffers to improve water quality.

Although applications are accepted on a year-round basis, eligible applicants interested in CSP Sage Grouse Initiative must first submit their application and the below listed items to their local service center by March 15th, 2023:

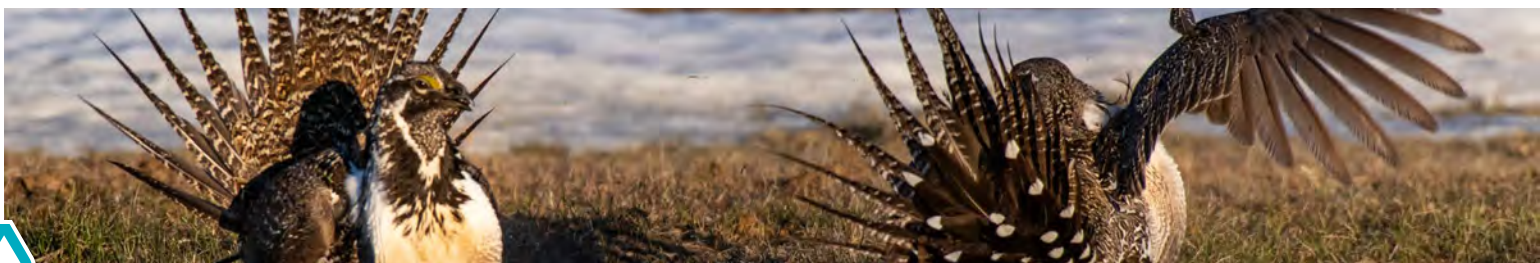
- Provide a map(s) that identifies and delineates the boundaries of all eligible land uses and acres included in the operation.
- Identify any ineligible land that is part of the operation.
- And then submit all of the following eligibility

determinations to FSA by April 1st, 2023:

- Highly Erodible Lands and Wetland Determination (AD 1026)
- Adjusted Gross Income Form (CCC 941)
- Farm and Track Eligibility determination
- Farm Operating Plan (CCC 902)

For more information on the Conservation Stewardship Program in Washington, [click here](#).

To learn how to get started with NRCS, [click here](#), or visit your [local USDA service center](#).



FY23 IRA-CSP batching period now open

NRCS-WA Batching date: March 31, 2023

FSA Eligibility Deadline: May 1, 2023

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington (NRCS-WA) announced the application batching period opened today for the Inflation Reduction Act – Conservation Stewardship Incentives Program (IRA-CSP) for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23). All eligible applications received by March 31, 2023 will be batched and then ranked for FY23 funding.

The IRA funding for NRCS-WA includes an additional \$5.4 million for IRA-CSP. IRA-CSP funding levels are proposed to almost double in FY2024.

IRA-CSP is a voluntary, technical, and financial assistance program designed to help farmers, ranchers, forestland owners, and Tribes with moving their operation to the next level of conservation. These

enhancements will focus on carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy, and soil health. The program focuses on increasing conservation implementation and solving natural resource concerns related to climate change. Conservation enhancements are limited to the those in the list at the bottom of this release.

If you already applied for CSP Classic within the last 12 months and hadn’t been selected for a contract to enhance your property, your application will automatically be added to IRA-CSP. If you haven’t applied for CSP Classic or IRA-CSP, applications are accepted on a year-round basis.

Each applicant must establish themselves as a USDA customer and obtain all Farm Service Agency (FSA) eligibility requirements by May 1, 2023. Please note, Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) determination takes

an average three weeks to be processed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Submitting your AGI form to FSA on the last day of the application period will result in your AGI eligibility not being met by the batching date for Fiscal Year 2023. IRA payments count toward CSP program payment limitations as applicable.

“Interested participants are encouraged to apply for 2023 funding,” said Keith Griswold, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs. “If you miss the batch date, don’t worry. IRA-CSP funds will be available for the next three years. Submit your application now!”

For more information on the Inflation Reduction Act – Conservation Stewardship Program in Washington, [click here](#).

To learn how to get started with NRCS, [click here](#), or visit your [local USDA service center](#).



FY23 IRA-EQIP batching period now open

NRCS-WA Batching date: March 31, 2023

FSA Eligibility Deadline: May 1, 2023

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington (NRCS-WA) announced the application batching period opened today for the Inflation Reduction Act - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (IRA-EQIP) for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23). All eligible applications received by **March 31, 2023** will be batched and then ranked for consideration of FY23 funding.

The IRA funding for NRCS-WA includes an additional \$2.2 million for IRA-EQIP. IRA funding levels are proposed to dramatically increase in Fiscal Year 2024.

IRA-EQIP is a voluntary, technical, and financial assistance program designed to help farmers, ranchers, forestland owners, and Tribes with the application of conservation measures that focus on carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy, and soil health. The program focuses strongly on conservation planning, conservation implementation, and solving natural resource concerns related to climate change. Conservation practices are limited to the those in the list at the bottom of this release.

If you already applied for EQIP Classic within the last 12 months and hadn’t been selected for a contract to solve your resource concerns, your application will automatically be added to IRA-EQIP. If you haven’t applied for EQIP Classic or IRA-EQIP, applications are accepted on a year-round basis.

Each applicant must establish themselves as a USDA customer and obtain all Farm Service Agency (FSA) eligibility requirements by **May 1, 2023**. Please note, Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) determination takes an average three weeks to be processed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Submitting your AGI form to FSA on the last day of the application period will result in your AGI eligibility not being met by the batching date for Fiscal Year 2023. IRA payments count toward EQIP program payment limitations as applicable.

“Interested participants are encouraged to apply for 2023 funding,” said Keith Griswold, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs. “If you miss the batch date, don’t worry. IRA-EQIP funds will be available for the next three years. Please, submit your application as soon as possible.”

For more information on the Inflation Reduction Act - Environmental Quality Incentives Program Classic in Washington, [click here](#).

To learn how to get started with NRCS, [click here](#), or visit your [local USDA service center](#).



USDA Invests \$9.4 Million in Compost and Food Waste Reduction Projects

USDA is investing more than \$9.4 million in 45 cooperative agreements that support innovative, scalable waste management plans to reduce and divert food waste from landfills. One of the recipients is the City of Leavenworth, Washington (information below). The Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR) cooperative agreements, which are funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, are part of USDA's broad support for urban agriculture through its Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP). The projects will be implemented between 2023 and 2025. More information is [available here](#).

City of Leavenworth

The City of Leavenworth Food Waste Reduction Pilot Project

This project focuses on waste 'recovery' through commercial composting. Other aspects of food waste reduction will be addressed through outreach efforts and community partnerships. There are two primary tasks -- education/outreach (in partnership with Waste Loop nonprofit) and the collection/hauling of organic waste (in partnership with Winton Manufacturing, Compost Works). The target population of the project is the greater Leavenworth community, encompassing the geographic area of the Cascade School District which includes the cities of Leavenworth, Plain & Peshastin.

The full list of projects can be found [here](#).



USDA Announces Grants for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

Apply by March 27, 2023

USDA is making available up to \$7.5 million for grants through its Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP). The competitive grants will support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects through two categories, Planning Projects and Implementation Projects.

[Learn more here.](#)

NRCS-WA releases specifics on FY23 Riparian Buffer Program

By Nate Gallahan

NRCS-WA State Public Affairs Specialist

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. – The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington (NRCS-WA) released more information on the completely voluntary FY23 Riparian Buffer Program, Jan. 5, 2023.

The new fact sheet includes information on four "tiers" of riparian buffers, with examples of associated practices and estimated payment scenarios – to include many with foregone income to help compensate landowners for income lost if they install a buffer.

"Riparian buffers are extremely important for water quality and to protect fish and wildlife habitat," said Roylene Comes At Night, State Conservationist for NRCS-WA. "We designed a program that would help producers in Washington decrease water temperatures by increasing the number of buffers installed. I believe that by providing compensation for the income that producers lose for land that is no longer in production is the key."

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Rebecca Anderson takes on urban and small farm conservation

By Adrian Melendez
NRCS-WA Public Affairs

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. - Rebecca Anderson has started her duties as the Small Farm & Urban Agriculture Specialist for Washington, at the end of 2022. While Rebecca is new to the position, she is not new to the job of conservation.



Rebecca is an Olympia native and has been a resource conservationist out of the Olympia office since July 2022. She received her BS from the University of Washington and majored in Environmental Science and Resources Management and minored in Aquatic and Fishery Sciences and Nutrition. She also holds certifications from the Permaculture Institute of North America, Holistic Management International, and the Soil Food Web School.

Prior to joining the NRCS-WA team, she was a pathway's intern with NRCS Texas at their Anson and La Grange offices and eventually was hired on as a Soil Conservationist in their Liberty and Cameron

offices before coming back home to Washington.

"Urban conservation is so diverse. It's amazing to see how different all the production systems are on smaller sites. People are showing you don't need huge acreage to produce food for a lot of people and get conservation on the ground," said Rebecca.

While she is excited to take on the challenge as the first Small Farm & Urban Agriculture Specialist, she knows she has work to do educating producers and the community on what Small Farm & Urban Agriculture is.

"Folks are open to trying out new ideas, open to feedback, and generally stoked on farming," she said.

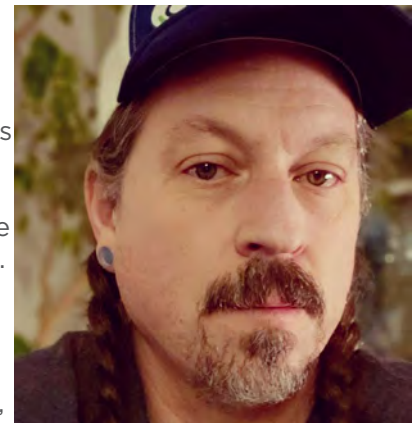
"I think urban conservation gets a bad rap and some producers don't want to be considered urban farmers based on stereotypes, though they might fall within the urban boundary. I think a more approachable term might be small farm conservation."

NRCS-WA appoints new State Archaeologist

By Adrian Melendez
NRCS-WA Public Affairs

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. - NRCS-WA has selected its first State Archaeologist, and he's no stranger to the Evergreen State team.

Grant Smith, current Cultural Resource Specialist for NRCS-WA, has been offered, and accepted, the position of State Archaeologist and will assume his duties and official title Feb. 12, 2023.



"Becoming the state archaeologist was a logical step in my career path," said Grant who has been doing the work as an archaeologist and cultural resource specialist for over a decade.

"I worked as an area archaeologist in Utah and in Washington State for the past 13 years," he said. "The challenge of taking on more of a leading role in the agency's mission is something that I am looking forward to."

[Read Full Article](#)



Marty Chaney awarded Pasture Conservationist of the Year

By **Adrian Melendez**

NRCS-WA Public Affairs

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. - Marty Chaney, NRCS-WA Pasture Management Specialist in Olympia, was presented with the National

Pastureland Conservation

Award at the American Forage and Grassland Council conference in Winston-Salem, N.C., Jan. 9-11.

Marty was recognized for her decades of federal service and dedication to pastureland conservation.

“Marty, sometimes known as ‘Mother Prairie’ or ‘The Grass Whisperer,’ is a well-known leader, expert, and respected pastureland specialist in Washington State,” said Tom Hilken, NRCS National Grazing Specialist, in a speech during the award presentation.

[Read Full Article](#)



NRCS-WA New Easement Team starts the ‘blitz’ on state easement process



By **Adrian Melendez**

NRCS-WA Public Affairs

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. - The purpose of the blitz was to start the organization of the 106 West Area wetland easements files that are part of the 163 total that NRCS-WA currently maintains within the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Wetland Reserve Easements.

“File management is critical for operations and

to glean the whole story of the easement while conducting stewardship,” said Carlee Elliott, State Easement Program Manager for NRCS-WA.

“Standard operations and folder organization is critical to run an efficient and effective conservation easement business,” she continued. “This will not only allow for easier file access, but also prepare NRCS-WA to go paperless and scan these documents into the Document Management System,”

The days weren’t only filled with file organization, but guest speakers also presented important information for the newly formed easement team. Alexandra James, NRCS-WA Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Easement Specialist, spoke to the team about how RCPP 2018 easements are administered, existing Washington RCPP easement projects, and how they can promote RCPP easements as a team in the state.

Addie Candib, American Farmland Trust (AFT) Regional Director, and Nick George, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Partnership Coordinator, also spoke to the team about how NRCS, AFT and USFWS currently work together and future collaboration opportunities.

[Read Full Article](#)



WSCC Center for Technical Development (CTD) March 2023 Commission Meeting

CTD Work Accomplishments

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

Explore more @ www.wactd.org

Certification

CTD Planner Certifications: The CTD Planner Certification Program accepts applications on a rolling basis through an online submission process. 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 Stewardship Planner Certification this fiscal year. This 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.

A Planner Certification – Who, What, How webinar is planned for spring 2023 to update district staff on the current processes for both CTD and NRCS Conservation Planner certifications. Certification documents on the CTD website will also be updated, along with a renewed outreach effort to promote certification.

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: The CTD continues to curate and share virtual support tools and training opportunities on our webpage and via GovDelivery. **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. Currently the **CTD currently hosts six Networking Forums: Cover Crop, Farm, Dairy, Riparian, Forestry, Plant Sale, and participation in these forums continues to grow.** 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 each forum 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 group meets 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.

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 training. 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 an NCP Symposium and Strategic Planning session at the recent National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) meeting, provide specific recommendations on how to improve access to training for all potential conservation planners. The CTD regularly participates with NRCS Washington and other state partners to improve training, certification, and communications.

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.

NRCS Training Events: The CTD is actively engaged in coordinating conservation district staff into several upcoming NRCS trainings:

Recent training updates:

- **Working Effectively With American Indians**, will be held May 15-19, 2023 in Yakima, WA. This long-anticipated course has available seats for CD and state staff.
- **Soil Health and Sustainability for Field Staff** will be held May 22-25, 2023, in Pullman, WA. 15 seats will be available for CD staff in this course, which is one of the three in-person required courses for NRCS Level III planners.
- **Conservation Planning, Part 2**, a critical training for all planners, will be held June 26-28, 2023 in Pullman, WA. There will be up to 17 seats available for district staff who have completed their Level I planning designation and are working toward Level III.
- **Riparian Considerations in Planning**, will be held July 24-28, 2023 in Pullman, WA. CTD is taking an active role in planning this course with NRCS partner staff, and seats are available for CD staff.

Other Training Events: The CTD is coordinating with WSCC staff and MRSC to provide **Contracting and Procurement Training** for district staff April 27-28, 2023 in Wenatchee, WA. CTD is also working with WSCC Sustainable Farms and Field staff to bring several carbon-planning and soil courses; **Understanding Soil Tests**, presented by WSDA staff will be held via Zoom on March 14, 2023. **COMET Farm Planner** trainings will be held on April 18, 2023 and May 25, 2023, also by Zoom. All virtual trainings and webinars are recorded and posted to the CTD Training Library.

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.

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.

The **CTD is coordinating monthly with the WADE Board to plan for and deliver the 2023 WADE conference**. The CTD and WADE meet regularly as planning begins for next year's conference. The CTD's focus is on technical session content, especially as it relates to conservation planner certification.

Training Scholarships: Training scholarships remain a priority for the CTD. CTD will award up to \$5000 in training scholarships in FY23, focused on providing support to those staff who are pursuing conservation planner certification.

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. **The CTD is working with WSCC Communication staff in FY23 to develop and share out resources for new employees.**

Mentoring Program: CTD continues to **develop mentoring opportunities to meet technical staff needs**, including those of new and existing planning staff, ongoing development for certified planners, and individual mentoring needs for relevant training events. We are working to identify potential mentors to pair with mentees, developing training for mentors, and supporting the networking forums and Building Better Leadership and Management series.

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.

Outreach: The **CTD Annual Update Webinar was held in early October 2022 to share CTD accomplishments and upcoming work plans, as well as to solicit feedback from district staff.** A standalone feedback survey was also shared, and a link to the survey is posted on the CTD website. These results help us identify how staff access CTD services, any potential barriers to obtaining CTD services, and current training needs for district staff.

Newsletter: The CTD monthly GovDelivery newsletter continues to gain new subscribers (currently we have **more than 600 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.

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.

Leadership: 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. 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:

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