



Washington State Conservation Commission

Business Meeting Packet

July 20, 2023

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

Wenatchee, WA

Our Mission:

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

WSCC Business Meeting

Confluence Technology Center
285 Technology Center Way #102, Wenatchee, WA 98801

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 360-407-7417, or call 711 relay service. All accommodation requests should be received no later than Friday, July 14, 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/Introductions	Chairman Williams
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roll Call• Introductions• Pledge of Allegiance• Additions/Corrections to agenda items• Opening Comments from Cascadia Conservation District• <i>Remembering Ron Shultz</i>	

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
9:00 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)	May 18, 2023 Draft Meeting Minutes	Chairman Williams
9:10 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)	2024 Legislative Proposals	Kirk Robinson/Alison Halpern
	c)	Forest Health & Wildfire Resiliency Program Guidelines	Shana Joy
	d)	Professional Engineering Program Guidelines	Shana Joy
10:10 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.	
	e)	Okanogan Conservation District Territory of Annexation	Mike Baden
10:15 a.m. – 15 MINUTE BREAK			
10:30 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.	
	f)	Water Resource Irrigation Efficiencies Program Guidelines	Jon Culp
	g)	Disaster Assistance Program Draft Guidelines	Jean Fike
	h)	Riparian Plant Propagation Program Update	B'Elanna Rhodehamel
	i)	Shellfish Final Draft Programmatic Guidelines	Alison Halpern
	j)	Salmon Riparian Grant Programs	Alison Halpern/Shana Joy

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
11:40 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.			
		k) Submission of Supplemental Budget Packages	Sarah Groth
12:00 p.m.	–	Lunch	
12:30 p.m.	2.	District Operations (<i>Information Only</i>)	
		a) District Operations and Regional Manager Report	Mike Baden
		b) Conservation Accountability & Performance Program Report	Shana Joy
1:00 p.m.	2.	District Operations (<i>Information Only</i>)	
		c) Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Monitoring	Brian Cochrane
1:30 p.m.	2.	Commission Operations (<i>Information Only</i>)	
		d) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workgroup Update	Jon Culp
		e) Summer of 2023 Drought update	Jon Culp
		f) Policy Update	Alison Halpern
		g) Executive Director Update	Kirk Robinson
		• Executive Director Recruitment Update	
		• Washington DC Congressional Delegation Report	
		• VSP Update	
		• Riparian Outreach and Education	
		• Organizational Structure	
2:45 p.m.	2.	Partner Updates	
		h) Natural Resources Conservation Service Update	<i>Packet Item Only</i>
		i) Department of Fish and Wildlife	<i>Packet Item Only</i>
		j) Center for Technical Development	Ryan Williams
		k) National Association of Conservation Districts	<i>Packet Item Only</i>
3:00 p.m.		Closing remarks- Adjourn	Chairman Williams



Remembering Ron Shultz

September 10, 1963 – July 1, 2023



CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
OF WASHINGTON STATE
your window to healthy lands

TAB 1

Regular Business Meeting ~

The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission/SCC) met virtually as well as in-person on Thursday, May 18, 2023 in Richland, Washington. Chairman Daryl Williams called the meeting to order at 8:33 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. (online)*
Cherie Kearney, *Governor Appointee*
Brook Beeler, *Department of Ecology*
Dean Longrie, *Elected west region rep (online)*
Harold Crose, *Elected central region rep*
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

Kirk Robinson, *Interim Executive Director*
Alison Halpern, *Scientific Policy Advisor*
Allisa Carlson, *SC Regional Manager*
B'Elanna Rhodehamel, *RPPP manager*
Bill Eller, *VSP Coordinator*
Kaisha Walker, *Administrative Assistant*
Karen Hills, *SFF Coordinator (online)*
Paige DeChambeau, *Communications Director*
Sarah Groth, *Director of Accounting & Budget*
Sarah Wilcox, *Communications Project Manager*
Shana Joy, *District Operations Manager*
Toyo Garber, *Communications Specialist*

Quorum present.

PARTNERS REPRESENTED

Angie Reseland, *Dept of Fish and Wildlife*
Doug Rushton, *National Association of Conservation Districts*
Roylene Comes At Night, *Natural Resources Conservation Service*
Tom Salzer, *WA Association of Conservation Districts*

GUESTS ATTENDED

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

Meeting called to order at 8:33am. Kaisha Walker to call roll call. Quorum present.

After Commissioner roll call, introductions were done for those in person at the meeting as well as online.

No changes or revisions to the presented agenda were mentioned.

Yakama Nation Representative Elaine Harvey was introduced by Commissioner Kearney. Kearney knows Elaine as a Fishery Biologist, Rock Creek Band Member from Southern WA and that they also serve on the Board of Columbia Land Trust. Conservation and Restoration Clarities. Also been working on the hydro systems on the Columbia Snake River. More recent title at Yakama Nation is the Environmental Coordinator. Elaine has been able to work in many different fields in Natural Resources. Originally worked in fisheries, but throughout the years has been pulled in many different directions with main purposes on water resources with threats to fish and wildlife habitat. Focus on issues with the Columbia River dams and warming. Fish kill is a major concern, in 2015 severe fish kill in the Columbia River where thousands of sockeye salmon were lost to salmon migrating North to Wenatchee River up to Lake Cle Elum, and even up to Canada. Yakama Nation has many priorities, but their first priority is water. Water is life, all life requires water. Having water in the Columbia River and all the tributaries is important as well as clean water. Having enough water for fish and wildlife as well as the other users is important. With climate change, this puts more pressure on the water resources. Yakama Nation believes in conservation and land for the long-term. Through the treaty in 1855, the Yakama Nation and US Government, the seated territories that were seated in those times includes about 1/3 of Washington State. Okanogan National Forests met the Wenatchee area all the way down to the Columbia River, west to the crest of the cascade mountains, and east to the serium. The land that we were gathered, was previously seated territory of Yakama Nations. During the treaty of 1855, Yakama Nation reserved rights to fish, hunt, and gather. Tribal access is important because they are losing access. Water conservation is key. Elaine expresses that the tribe has programs that could utilize funding, from Range and Agricultural depts. Many fishery offices and projects are underway, and Elaine says they would like to be included in some of the funding conversations.

CONSENT AGENDA

Chair Williams moves onto Consent Agenda and opens for public comment. No hands raised for public comment.

Motion by Commissioner Crose to adopt the March 16, 2023 draft business meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Beale. Motion passed.

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve the March 24, 2023 draft special meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.

Motion by Commissioner Crose to approve the April 11, 2023 draft special meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Kearney. Motion passed.

COMMISSION OPERATIONS

Chair Williams moves on to Commission Operations and opens for public comment.

Loren Meagher, from Central Klickitat and Eastern Klickitat Conservation Districts makes public comment. Comments on the Forest Health & Wildfire Resiliency Program, says great work Shana with building relationships. Also appreciates the work done on the engineering guidelines. Loren speaks on behalf of his boards requesting that the engineering guidelines presented are adopted with an exception of not having an option to create new regional programs. The boards feel that the existing regional programs should be fully funded and given the opportunity to increase capacity. Concerns that division between individual districts hosting in house engineering where two districts

forming a group and splitting the funds would put all participants right back in the same place they were before with not enough funding to support a full program team.

Mike Tobin from North Yakima Conservation District makes comment. States that engineering is critical. Discusses the history of original allocation to build capacity, not of individual districts, but of the discipline. Says the programs have been woefully underfunded for years. The intent was to build engineering teams that serve all engineering needs. Says previously, some districts have not built teams, but focused on one or two projects, still collecting their cuts of the funding. To take any of this money and start offering it as grant funding or special project funding defeats purpose. Tobin says there are other state and federal funds made available for funding your one or two engineering projects. This is about building a team, and forward thinking. Urges to fully fund these teams at \$300,000, and do not allow any additional teams unless additional funding comes about. Also adds that the expectation needs to be enforced that if a district participates in a cluster, more money should be brought to the table.

Chair Williams to call on Interim Executive Director Kirk Robinson to discuss his proposal of Executive Director selection committee.

Robinson revisits the selection committee conversation that was originally discussed at the April 11, 2023 special meeting. Robinson explains that this committee will be a commitment. Robinson puts together a rough timeline of commitment that it may take during this process, and collects that it would take about 2 weeks of commitment. Mentions that we can not exceed 5 Commissioners on the committee as it then forms a quorum. Robinson restates his recommendation and strong suggestion suggests that we do not have an SCC staff member on the committee. States we have strong and helpful staff, but feels like a staff member can be put in a difficult situation. Plan is to have final results of those submitting proposals in early June, then DES takes first round in scoring, and then narrow down to three of the top consultants. A face-to-face interview with a special group will take place. Robinson's hope is to have the consultant hired by early July to stay on track with the proposed timeline.

Commissioner Longrie makes a motion to accept option 3 of what Robinson proposed in the memo of the SCC meeting packet. Seconded by Commissioner Crose.

Commissioner Beale asks if option 3 will still consists of an SCC employee. Robinson responds no.

Commissioner Kearney clarifies that there is no SCC staff included in this option, but just becomes a 10-person committee.

Robinson states removing an SCC staff member, but adding 2 district managers would make a 10-person committee.

Commissioner Rentz adds that she believes we would want to accept option 2 and 3 of the memo.

Commissioner Longrie and Crose to entertain a friendly amendment.

Chair Williams would like to move with the motion as it stands and merging option 2 and 3 together.

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to make an adjustment to the current selection committee in not having a SCC staff member on the committee and adding at least one of the interested stakeholders to the selection committee, and expand the committee to include up to two of the interested parties. Seconded by Commissioner Beale. Motion passed.

Commissioner Mumford opposed.

Robinson would like to add next steps for the committee. A Chair of the committee will be selected, and their next step would be to work with the consultant on developing a gameplan moving forward. Robinson will create a timeline but will leave it up to the appointed chair on how to move forward.

Chair Williams calls Bill Eller to discuss updated Commission CEMP/COOP-Adoption.

Motion by Commissioner Crose to approve the adoption of the 2023 CEMP/COOP. Seconded by Commissioner Kropf. Motion passed.

Chair Williams to call Shana Joy to discuss Natural Resource Investments Program Guidelines.

Meeting packet contains a cover memo and a table of comments, a track changes version, and a final version of changes. In March, some clarifications and tweaks were made and issued to districts allowing feedback. Shana to move forward with presentation.

Commissioner Longrie agrees to make a motion to adopt the Natural Resource Investments Programmatic Guidelines as presented for implementation beginning July 1, 2023.

Commissioner Mumford asks when looking at other mechanisms, can we expect a timeline for a report back?

Shana is happy to continue to report back with updates at future meetings in district operation regional manager reports.

More discussion had on NRI guidelines.

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to adopt the Natural Resource Investments Programmatic Guidelines as presented for implementation beginning July 1, 2023. Seconded by Commissioner Mumford. Motion passed.

Chair Williams calls Shana Joy to present on Forest Health & Wildfire Resiliency Program Guidelines.

Shana brings forth draft guidelines in presentation. Discusses background and where the guidelines came from. States that the guidelines need more work, and she plans to work with districts to explore better updates and revisions.

Motion by for Commissioner Longrie to direct staff to send out the draft Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency programmatic guidelines for review and comment by conservation districts. Seconded by Commissioner Mumford. Motion passed.

Shana Joy to present on the Professional Engineering Program Guidelines.

Shana opens her presentation with the background on engineering grants from 2000-present. Draft guidelines were sent to districts, and feedback was gathered. Comments can be found in the meeting packet. Shana discussed some common themes amongst the districts, which include funds allocated, reporting, engineering programs support, interlocal agreements, and equipment. Further explains how the draft guidelines support or address these topics. Shana opens the floor for questions and action.

Commissioner Crose questions about distribution of workload, and justification to accept any new proposed areas.

Shana has not heard any justification on why any specific districts would want to propose to create a new areas but says a proposal can be done to research further if the board decides.

Commissioner Crose suggest that the Commission hold until gathering more information from the districts who are wanting to propose a new area.

Further conversation had regarding proposed guidelines, and how the funds will be divided.

Commissioner Crose asks the urgency of why these guidelines should be passed now, rather than waiting for the next meeting.

Shana states that implementation grants, engineering grant allocations are typically decided before July 1 so districts have an idea of how much money they will be able to spend on projects going into a new fiscal year. Waiting until after July 1, there would be some time of uncertainty for the districts that host engineers about how much funding would be available to them.

Commissioner Longrie moves to make a motion to approve the final Professional Engineering Grant Guidelines for implantation as of July 1, 2023. No second. Motion dies.

Chair Williams asks if the guidelines are put off until July, would Shana be able to bring back additional information that has been requested.

Shana states she would need to reach out to the two districts that are wanting to create new areas to provide justification. If all information from the districts can be gathered before July 20, Shana is willing to bring an updated proposal to the Commission at the next business meeting.

Sarah Groth makes comment that if the board would like to wait to decide, she can alter the chart of funding awards and allot a specific amount for the first month of the fiscal year. This way the nine districts can continue to work while no decisions are made on the programmatic guidelines or additional funding.

Commissioner Crose would like an overall picture of how all the districts/areas are performing, not just the two districts justifications.

Chair Williams does not recommend dividing by districts as some districts have more of a workload than others, but would recommend looking at the workload by clusters.

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to fund conservation districts for the month of the July until revised Professional Engineering programmatic guidelines are re-proposed at the July 20, 2023 commission business meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Mumford. Motion passed.

Commissioners Beale and Longrie opposed.

Chair Williams mentions that adding a couple of members to the Commission was discussed at the strategic meeting the previous day, and there was no support of that at this time. No action will be taken on this.

Break taken at 10:51am.

DISTRICT OPERATIONS

Chair Williams calls meeting back to order at 11:04 am. Moves forward on agenda to District Operations, and calls for public comment. No hands raised.

Discussion had about conservation district appointments.

Motion by Commissioner Beale to approve to appoint the uncontested conservation district supervisor appointments for the west region to their respective conservation districts (Lynn Simpson, Cowlitz CD, Al Latham, Jefferson County CD, Michael O'Day, Mason CD, Allan Lougheed, Pacific CD, San Juan Islands, Lynn Bahrych, San Juan Islands CD, Margery Hite, Skagit CD, Bengt Coffin, Underwood CD, Thomas Langston, Wahkiakum CD, Suzanne Snyder, Whatcom CD, Mark Sytsma, Whidbey Island CD). Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.

Motion by Commissioner Beale to approve the appointment of Burr Mosby to the King Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.

Commissioner Beale moves to approve the appointment Bruce McDonald to the Lewis Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve the appointment of all the uncontested conservation district supervisor appointments for the central region (Bridget Gallant, Benton CD, Alice Lombard, Clark CD, Marty Hudson, Central Klickitat CD, Karen Van de Graaf-Erickson, Eastern Klickitat, Lynn Brown, Kittitas County CD, Cindy Reed, North Yakima CD, Jerry Asmussen, Okanogan CD, and Dirk Van Slageren, South Yakima CD). Seconded by Commissioner Kearney. Motion passed.

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the appointment of all the uncontested conservation district supervisor appointments for the east region (Michael Broeckel, Adams CD, Jerry Hendrickson, Asotin County CD, Joann Marshall, Ferry CD, John Floyd, Pend Oreille CD, Stuart Elliott, Rock Lake CD, and Thomas Miller, Spokane CD). Seconded by Commissioner Beeler. Motion passed.

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to appoint Dan Roseburg to the Columbia Basin Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Seconded by Commissioner Beeler. Motion passed.

Pine Creek Conservation District Supervisor Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to appoint Mitchell Jamison to the Pine Creek Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Seconded by Commissioner Beeler. Motion passed.

Chair Williams calls on Bill Eller to discuss King Conservation District Election Investigation and Conservation District Elections Certification.

King CD Election investigation information can be found in the business meeting packet. Eller's recommendation is that the King CD election should be certified as the issue did not raise a level of significant non-compliance.

Interim Executive Director, Kirk Robinson, suggests combining King CD certification with the other 44 district election certifications in the next agenda item.

No objections were made.

Eller to continue presentation on the other CD Elections Certifications.

Motion by Commissioner Crose that the SCC certify and announce the official winners of all 45 CD elections, as listed in the table of the May 18, 2023 business meeting packet. Seconded by Commissioner Beale. Motion passed.

Chair Williams to call Josh Giuntoli to discuss the Petition for inclusion of territory for Grays Harbor CD.

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve the petition for inclusion of the City of Hoquiam within the boundaries of the Grays Harbor Conservation District. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed. 3:08

Chair Williams breaks meeting for lunch at 12:02pm.

BUDGET & FINANCE

Chair Williams to call meeting back to order at 12:35pm, and moves on to Budget and Finance.

No hands raised for public comment.

Sarah Groth opens this section by mentioning that she sent all Commissioners an updated memo and allocation chart based on the changes and recommendations made during the Engineering Programmatic Guidelines presentation.

The current meeting packet found online contains all updated information.

Although additional funding is being received, no major changes will be proposed at this time. Some funding has been allocated for a few new positions at the Commission.

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve the funding proposal proposed below with specific award amounts for the following grant programs listed in the May 18, 2023 business meeting packet. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.

1. **SCC Administration** The operating budget passed by the legislature allows for administration funding to continue at the same levels as the 2021-23 biennium. As SCC staff determine best course(s) of action, SCC staff recommends continuing administration activities at the 2021-23 level with a few adjustments to increase staff capacity in areas the Chair, Interim Executive Director and commission staff have identified.

Included in this are additional items added to our operating budget:

- Organic & Climate Smart Ag Evaluation
- Community Engagement Plan
- Ag Science Program (Ecosystem Monitoring)
- Salmon Riparian Education & Communications
- Artificial Lighting (King CD)

2. **Implementation Allocation** (Exhibit 1): SCC recommends funding for Implementation at \$5,802,075 per fiscal year, an increase of approximately \$500,000 per fiscal year due to increased CTA funding received in the 2023-2025 operating budget.

3. **Task Orders:** The operating budget allows SCC to continue funding NRCS task orders at the same amount as fiscal year 2023 funding not to exceed \$225,000 per fiscal year. SCC staff are working with districts and NRCS to prepare task orders to allow districts to begin work July 1, 2023. SCC staff recommend, as was the case in fiscal year 2023, SCC staff in consultation with NRCS would be authorized to approve and execute new task orders.

4. **Riparian Plant Propagation:** The operating budget allows SCC to continue funding the RPPP at \$1,300,000 per fiscal year. SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance with commission approved programmatic guidelines for Riparian Plant Propagation Program as well as additional RFP's developed with the assistance of DES, not to exceed \$1,300,000.

5. **Sustainable Farms & Fields:** The operating budget allows SCC to continue funding the SFF at \$1,500,000 per fiscal year. SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance with commission approved programmatic guidelines for Sustainable Farms & Fields Program not to exceed \$1,500,000.

6. **Salmon Riparian Restoration Program Outreach:** The Legislature appropriated \$3,000,000 for Salmon Riparian Restoration Program Outreach funding is provided solely to support the outreach, identification and implementation of salmon riparian habitat restoration projects appropriated through the capital budget. SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance with commission approved programmatic guidelines Salmon Riparian Funding Grant Program.

7. **Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resiliency:** The Legislature appropriated \$5,000,000 for Forest Health & Community Wildfire funding is provided for the commission to work with conservation districts to address unhealthy forests and build greater community resiliency to wildfire. SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance with commission approved programmatic guidelines for Forest Health & Community Wildfire and any cultural resource work required per Executive Order

8. Disaster Assistance Program (DAP): The Legislature appropriated \$600,000/\$300,000 per fiscal year for One-time funding is provided solely to support continued development of the disaster assistance program established in RCW 89.08.645, to provide short-term financial support for farmers and ranchers during disasters. Funding must be prioritized for farmers and ranchers who are most economically vulnerable. SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance with commission approved programmatic guidelines for Disaster Assistance Program and any cultural resource work required per Executive Order 21-02.

9. Engineering Allocation (Exhibit 1): Professional Engineering grant will increase funding to \$200,000 per engineering, per fiscal year 2023. SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance with commission approved programmatic guidelines for Professional Engineering.

10. Firewise: The Legislature appropriated \$10,000,000, One-time funding is provided solely for the commission to provide grants to local government and private landowners for fire wise projects to reduce forest fuel loading in areas deemed a high hazard for potential wildfire. SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance with commission approved programmatic guidelines for Firewise and any cultural resource work required per Executive Order 21-02.

11. Sustainable Farms and Fields – Climate-Smart Livestock Management: The Legislature appropriated \$30,000,000. The appropriation is provided solely for grants through the sustainable farms and fields program for organic agricultural waste and greenhouse gas emissions reduction through climate-smart livestock management. SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance programmatic guidelines once passed by the commission.
Grant up to \$22,000,000 toward cost share agreements for anaerobic digester development to dairy farm owners. Grant up to \$6,000,000 for technical and financial assistance to increase implementation of climate smart livestock management, alternative manure management, and other best management practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon sequestration. Grant up to \$2,000,000 for research on, or demonstration of, projects with greenhouse gas reduction benefits.

12. VSP: SCC received several appropriations for VSP including:

- \$8,533,000 Funding provided solely for implementation of the voluntary stewardship program.
- \$1,420,000 Funding provided solely to support monitoring and reporting efforts necessary to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of voluntary stewardship program work plans.
- \$379,000 Funding provided for staffing and ongoing funding is provided for four counties to enroll in the voluntary stewardship program pursuant to Substitute Senate Bill 5353 (Voluntary stewardship prog)
- \$3,000,000 Project Funding – Capital
- \$1,000,000 Skagit County Project Funding – Capital

13. Irrigation Efficiencies (Exhibit 1): Irrigation Efficiencies - The appropriation is provided solely for technical assistance and grants to conservation districts for the purpose of implementing water conservation measures and irrigation efficiencies. The state conservation commission shall give preference to projects located in the sixteen fish critical basins, other water-short or drought impacted basins, and basins with significant water resource and instream flow issues. Projects that are not within the basins described in this subsection are also eligible to receive funding. Conservation districts statewide are eligible for grants. A conservation district receiving funds shall manage each grant to ensure that a portion of the water saved by the water conservation measure or irrigation efficiency will be available for other instream and out-of-stream uses and users. The proportion of saved water made available for other uses and users must be equal to the percentage of the public investment in the conservation measure or irrigation efficiency.

14. **CREP:** Project development and project management/TA (Exhibit 1): The capital budget passed by the legislature included \$4,000,000 for CREP from the State Building Construction Account and \$11,000,000 from the Natural Climate Solutions Account for a total of \$15,000,000 for project development and project management/TA and cost share activities. Reappropriation for unspent 2021-2023 Cost Share and TA funds was also included in the budget bill. For CREP, the program manager is recommending initial CREP TA funding for FY 24 at the level established in FY22. Pending conversations with district staff and review of the outreach conducted with supplemental FY 23 funds, these amounts may be amended, at the discretion of the CREP program manager, not to exceed a total of \$2,000,000 for the fiscal year. CREP cost share and maintenance will continue to be requested and awarded as needed by districts consistent with the CREP maintenance policy established in 2017.

15. **Shellfish:** The Legislature reappropriated unspent 2021-2023 Shellfish and \$3,500,000 in new funding for Shellfish. SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance with commission approved programmatic guidelines for Shellfish and any cultural resource work required per Executive Order 21-02.

16. **Natural Resource Investments:** The Legislature reappropriated unspent 2021-2023 NRI and \$4,000,000 in new funding for NRI. SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance with commission approved programmatic guidelines and any cultural resource work required per Executive Order 21-02.

17. **Riparian Grant Program:** The Legislature reappropriated unspent 2021-2023 Salmon Riparian Funding Grant Program and \$25,000,000 in new funding for Riparian Grant Program (previously known as Salmon Riparian Funding Grant Program). SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance with commission approved programmatic guidelines and any cultural resource work required per Executive Order 21-02.

18. **Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI):** The Legislature appropriated \$1,500,000 in new funding for WSRRI. This funding is provided to SCC to continue wildlife friendly fencing projects that are currently being completed with pass through funding from WDFW. SCC staff request approval to award funding once the commission approved programmatic guidelines and any cultural resource work required per Executive Order 21-02.

19. **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):** The Legislature reappropriated unspent 2021-2023 funding and \$3,000,000 in new funding for RCPP. SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance with commission approved programmatic guidelines and any cultural resource work required per Executive Order 21-02.

20. **Farmland Preservation and Land Access (FPLA):** The Legislature reappropriated unspent 2021-2023 funding and \$4,000,000 in new funding for FPLA. SCC staff request approval to award funding in accordance with commission approved programmatic guidelines. Proposals will still be brought to commissioners for approval before entering contracts.

Sarah moves forward to the next item on the agenda, Grants and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual. Discusses the changes proposed since the last Commission meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Kearney to approve the proposed changes to the Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual effective July 1, 2023. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.

Sarah states that action was approved at the March Commission meeting for SCC Executive Director and WACD Executive Director can begin work on a draft scope of work. There have been no changes to the draft of work, and the SCC will extend the contract with a 10% increase due to inflation.

Motion by Commissioner Kearney to approve the request for SCC Interim Executive Director Kirk Robinson to enter a contract with WACD not to exceed \$82,500 for fiscal year 2024. Seconded by Commissioner Longrie. Motion passed. Commissioner Mumford abstained.

Sarah to move forward to discuss 2024 Supplemental Budget Packages. Requests action to explore two budget topics. One, to increase funding for Conservation Technical Assistance, and two, additional positions that are needed at SCC.

Motion by Commissioner Beeler to approve supplemental budget topics listed below for further development by SCC staff for possible submittal for the 2024 supplemental budget. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.

POLICY & PROGRAMS

Chair Williams to move into the Policy and Programs section of the agenda. Opens for public comment.

Loren Meagher makes comment. Microphone was not turned on, so comment was inaudible.

Chair to call Karen Hills to present on modifications made to the Sustainable Farms and Fields Programmatic Guidelines.

Karen discusses some of the main changes to the guidelines since the last Commission meeting.

Commissioner Crose thanks Karen for the communication and hard work done on rolling this program out. Asks if virtual fencing is included in temporary fencing.

Virtual fencing is a separate SCC practice, and currently not eligible in the SFF program.

Commissioner Crose makes a request to include virtual fencing into the SFF program.

Motion by Commissioner Beale to adopt revised SFF programmatic guidelines. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.

Chair Williams calls on B'Elanna Rhodehamel to present and discuss the Riparian Plant Propagation Program (RPPP) Update.

B'Elanna gives brief overview of the program, discusses updates on the latest accomplishments, next steps, and introduces some draft programmatic guidelines recently developed. States there have been two rounds of funding opened for districts this far. Funds were used for infrastructure such as greenhouses, materials such as pots and soils, overheads, etc.

Discussion had regarding RPPP guidelines.

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve distribution of this portion of draft RPPP guidelines to the conservation districts for 45-day review process. Commissioner Kearney. Motion passed.

Chair Williams calls on Alison Halpern to present on the Shellfish Grant Draft Programmatic Guidelines Update.

Alison opens presentation with the background of the Shellfish program. States the Commission has been having funding for the program since 2013, but guidelines have not been updated since 2018. Explains that the new draft guidelines provide more criteria about what an ideal shellfish project looks like. After reviewing the previous guidelines, Alison states that the guidelines should be more specific so that districts know what the Commission is looking for before submitting their projects for funding. Alison continues to present and opens the floor for discussion.

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to approve the distribution of the draft updated shellfish guidelines to the districts for a 45-day review period. Seconded by Commissioner Beale. Motion passed.

All informational only items from the agenda were discussed.

Meeting adjourned at 3:33pm.

Online Participants

1. Alan Chapman, Whatcom CD
2. Alicia McClendon, WSCC
3. Anna Beebe, Whatcom CD
4. Bob Amrine, Lewis CD
5. Brandy Reed, Whatcom
6. Brian Cochrane, WSCC
7. C L
8. Craig Nelson, Okanogan CD
9. Dave Hedrick, Ferry CD
10. David Marcell, Pacific CD
11. Dean Hellie, Stevens County CD
12. Deanna Elliott, Columbia Basin CD
13. Evan Bauder, Mason CD
14. Heather McCoy, Whidbey CD
15. Jan Thomas, CTD
16. Jean Fike, WSCC
17. Joe Holtrop, Jefferson CD
18. Josh Giuntoli, WSCC
19. Joy Garitone, Kitsap CD
20. Karen Zirkle, DNR
21. Karen Hills, WSCC
22. Karla Heinitz, WSCC
23. Kate Delavan, WSCC
24. Kim Williams, Clallam CD
25. Lori Gonzalez, WSCC
26. Mark Sytsma, Whidney CD
27. Megan Stewart, Asotin CD
28. Michelle Wilcox, EPA
29. Mike Nordin, Pacific CD
30. Nick Vira, NRCS
31. Paul D'Agnolo, WSCC
32. Rosa Mendez-Perez, King CD
33. Ryan Williams, Cascadia CD
34. Stuart Crane, Yakama
35. Tova Tillinghast
36. Zorah Oppenheimer, Clark CD

Other In-Person Participants:

1. Loren Meagher, Central and Eastern Klickitat CD
2. Jeff Schibel, Lincoln County CD

3. Michael Tobin, North Yakima CD
4. Renee Hadley, Walla Walla County CD
5. Elaine Harvey, Yakama Nation



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 20, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, Interim Executive Director

FROM: Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency Draft Guidelines

Action Item

X

Informational Item

Summary:

With the direct appropriation of funding to SCC in the recent 2023 legislative session, it is time to update the prior community wildfire resiliency funding procedures into full programmatic guidelines. Draft guidelines (an updated version of our prior procedures) were shared with conservation districts following the May Commission meeting for review and comment. Updates are ongoing on the application and reporting forms to incorporate feedback that has been shared by CDs. SCC staff requests that Commissioners approve these programmatic guidelines for implementation.

Requested Action (if action item):

Commissioners approve the Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency Programmatic Guidelines as presented for implementation.

Staff Contact:

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

Background and Discussion:

SCC and conservation districts have worked for many years to secure funding for conservation districts to provide forest health and community wildfire resiliency services. One-time funding was provided for “firewise” work in FY17-18 and funding has been provided by DNR through contracts in the current biennium on a limited basis. In the recent 2023 legislative session, the SCC was appropriated ongoing operating funds beginning in the 23-25 biennium in the amount of \$5 million per biennium. Forest health and community wildfire resiliency “*funding is provided for the commission to work with conservation districts to address unhealthy forests and build greater community resiliency to wildfire.*” Additionally, funding from the Natural Climate Solutions Account

was appropriated to the SCC for Firewise projects. *“One-time funding is provided solely for the commission to provide grants to local government and private landowners for fire wise projects to reduce forest fuel loading in areas deemed a high hazard for potential wildfire.”*

Updates are ongoing on the application and reporting forms to incorporate feedback that has been shared by CDs. SCC staff requests that Commissioners approve these programmatic guidelines for implementation.

The final guidelines that are attached began with a set of procedures that we have been using to administer funds provided by DNR under contracts in FY23. With the direct appropriation of funding to SCC, it was time to update those procedures into full programmatic guidelines. Draft guidelines were shared with conservation districts following the May 18th Commission meeting for review and comment. The compiled comments are attached for reference. Revisions to the application and reporting forms are in progress and will be complete before the program is rolled out. SCC staff are requesting that Commissioners approve the programmatic guidelines as presented today for implementation.

Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency Grant Programmatic Guidelines

Comments Received

June 2023

Topic Area	Comment	Action/Edit
General	Track changes suggested edits for clarity and readability submitted on guidelines document directly.	All great suggested edits which were accepted in the new version.
Eligible Activities	<p>The eligible activities list looks comprehensive enough. The SCC practice list seems comprehensive. Is there a process to request addition of practices to the SCC list?</p> <p>Prescribed fire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would the list of eligible activities include support for prescribed burn plan writing and prescribed burn association facilitation? Cascadia CD intends to provide ongoing facilitation/organizing support for prescribed burn associations and would like to utilize this funding to cover a contract coordinator. - What would it take add prescribed burning as an eligible practice for cost share – costs for this effort might include equipment rental (Water trailer) or labor to create fire lines or other labor to ensure a safe burn. - Would we be able to cover costs for “Learn and Burn” workshops with this funding? 	<p>The FH-CWR operating funding can be used for technical assistance, outreach/workshops, and coordination activities.</p> <p>Consideration of adding Rx burning as an SCC BMP will require a more in-depth, broader discussion than these programmatic guidelines specifically.</p>
	Is equipment of any kind eligible with this funding? If it is, what restrictions?	Clarification added to guidelines.
	There is no specification for education and outreach related to forest health work, which we would like to see addressed as that is important for us to be able to do.	This is an eligible activity for this funding. No changes needed to guidelines.
	I agree with the guidelines would like added to Eligible Activities. After the fire property assessments and project needs collection to prevent future damage from flooding etc.	Technical assistance following a fire is an eligible activity.
	The guidelines are great. The only clarification I’d suggest is whether or not equipment purchases to support forest health work are allowed as a reimbursable expense.	Clarification added to the guidelines around equipment.
Applying for Funding	Will we be able to request project funding for the Firewise funding on an ongoing basis? I recommend a monthly deadline for at least the first 3 months to allow for project development to occur and staff to pull together applications.	Yes, funding will be made available on an ongoing basis until fully allocated.

	How will the application limit per district work for cluster foresters? As Mason CD provides forestry services for multiple CD areas, will that be considered within the application process? Will all districts we serve have to be coordinated into one group application or will other districts served for forestry be able to apply separately? For example, if another district wanted to do a relevant project but we provide forestry services for them would that be under two applications or need to be added to the one application?	Limitation on applications from districts removed from guidelines.
	Related to this larger, multi-district service area, we understand there is currently no funding cap for requests. If this is something put in place in the future, it seemed to be implied during discussions it would be one number regardless of the application, but it would be far harder to provide services to larger regions when limited to the same funding as a single district area, especially in terms of project implementation. If there needs to be a cap, would it be possible to have separate caps depending on individual vs. grouped applications?	Rather than a cap on amount of funds that can be applied for, prioritization criteria were added to guidelines to aid in funding allocations.
	Will the applications within the 14-day solicitation period be weighted equally or will it be first-come-first-served situation?	Criteria were added to the guidelines to aid in funding allocation if funds are limited.
	We would like to see this funding operating on the biennium, rather than year-to-year as it will be more efficient and effective to our operations and programming. The amount of uncertainty with only year-to-year funding creates additional management challenges and leads to less time serving our cooperators as well as limiting our ability to grow programs and implement more long-term projects.	The FH-CWR and Firewise funding is operating biennial funding. Also, FH-CWR operating funding is ongoing while Firewise funding is one-time.
	Under Timeline and Application for Funding: There is a description of the process of how funds will be distributed for subsequent funding, but nothing about how the first round of funding will be distributed. Will it be a competitive process? Will there be ranking criteria? Is there a cap?	No cap on amount of funds that can be requested. Criteria were added to the guidelines for prioritization of applications if funds are not sufficient.



Legislative Building
Olympia, WA 98504-0482

Washington State Senate

Phone: (360) 786-7550
FAX: (360) 786-1999

Washington State Conservation Commission
300 Desmond Drive SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Attn: Josh Guintoli

RE: Draft Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency Grant Guidelines

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Forest Health Grant Guidelines. Wildfires have become a growing concern for Eastern and Western Washington. This grant program is an excellent opportunity for local districts to empower landowners to be good stewards of their property and protect themselves from damage from wildfire through fuels reduction.

We applaud you for your utilization of existing procedures within the commission. Additionally, we appreciate the utilization of the high priority areas identified by the Department of Natural Resources. The Commission and the Department have been given several different buckets of money to accomplish wildfire abatement and forest health activities. It is important that the money is spent in the most efficient way possible, utilizing local stakeholders and the Department as much as possible.

Finally, it is our hope that the combination of funding for the districts, for local governments and landowners, for the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Department of Natural Resources to increase forest resiliency, specifically through ladder fuels reduction, results in less harmful smoke and fewer damaging fires in this biennium and into the future. We believe you have created guidelines for this grant program that will accomplish those goals.

Sen. Judy Warnick, Caucus Chair 13th District

Sen. Shelly Short, Minority Floor Leader, 7th District

Sen. Curtis King, 14th District

Sen. Lynda Wilson, 17th District

Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency Programmatic Guidelines

July 2023

Program Background

Climate change and drought-associated increases in the frequency and severity of wildfires in Washington State, historical forest management practices, and increasing populations in rural and suburban areas make it vitally important that private landowners steward forest land for improved health and resilience and be prepared for wildfire. Improving forest health for climate and wildfire resiliency is critical at the same time as rural populations are growing and forest parcels are becoming smaller and more numerous. Education, information, and technical and financial assistance are needed to assist new and long-time forest land managers alike to manage their forest lands for better health and wildfire resiliency.

Historically, conservation districts have been an important local provider of forest health and community wildfire resiliency information to landowners/homeowners, forest stewardship planning and fire risk assessment services, and incentives to implement recommended practices that improve forest stand conditions and reduce forest fuels. Community wildfire resiliency support activities and actions such as the [Firewise USA®](#) program, [Fire Adapted Communities](#) resources, [Wildfire Ready Neighbors](#), and [Ready Set Go](#), are important for landowners and communities to be aware of to increase the wildfire resiliency of their private property and communities.

In the 2023 legislative session, the SCC was appropriated ongoing operating funds beginning in the 23-25 biennium in the amount of \$5 million per biennium. Forest health and community wildfire resiliency *“funding is provided for the commission to work with conservation districts to address unhealthy forests and build greater community resiliency to wildfire.”*

Additionally, funding from the Natural Climate Solutions Account was appropriated to the SCC for Firewise projects. *“One-time funding is provided solely for the commission to provide grants to local government and private landowners for fire wise projects to reduce forest fuel loading in areas deemed a high hazard for potential wildfire.”* This funding is one-time funding that must be expended by the end of the 23-25 biennium which ends on June 30, 2025.

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 funds.

Timeline & Application for Funding

Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency (CWR) funds are allocated to conservation districts at the beginning of each fiscal year, in the month of July. Funds will be allocated as soon as possible. If funds are turned back, additional allocations may be made later. To apply for funding, districts will need to submit a [Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resiliency Application Form](#). Districts may apply for funds individually or in groups.

Applications will be reviewed by Regional Managers and SCC financial staff for complete information and adherence to program guidelines before funds will be awarded. Applications for funding will be reviewed monthly for as long as funding is available. The first review of applications will occur on August 22nd.

Throughout each biennium, Regional Managers will interact with each conservation district with allocated CWR funding to ascertain project progress. To amend a CWR 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, subsequent application rounds may be conducted. If that occurs, funding will be distributed through a competitive process utilizing the [Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resiliency Application Form](#). Criteria (see below) will be utilized, and additional criteria may be established if necessary and appropriate, and published in a funding availability announcement. At least a 14-day solicitation period for applications would be conducted. A limit or cap on funding may be set, if necessary, per application regardless of if an application includes one district or multiple districts.

All work including any cost share projects must be completed by the end of the biennium which is by **June 30, 2025**.

Funding Criteria

- Projects should be located in high priority areas identified in the [20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan for Eastern WA](#), [2020 Washington Forest Action Plan](#), [Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan](#), [Community Wildfire Protection Plans](#) or in high risk areas identified in conjunction with local stakeholders (regional DNR staff, local fire districts, etc.).
 - Districts may refer to a county hazard mitigation plan that indicates implementing Firewise USA or improving community wildfire resiliency is a priority for their county.
 - Districts may also refer to long-range and annual work plans that identify forest health and/or community wildfire resiliency as a priority.
- Districts are highly encouraged to leverage funds and other resources with local entities/agencies.
- Districts are highly encouraged to partner and coordinate with local stakeholders and regional DNR staff.

Reporting

- Each district allocated funds must provide a descriptive report with measurable accomplishments and deliverables no later than July 10 for the prior fiscal year's work

The reporting form, including required metrics and deliverables to report is located here: [CWR Report Form](#).

- All funded cost-share and completed District Implemented Projects and practices must be entered in the CPDS.
- Compiled reports of accomplishments and deliverables will be provided to DNR on an annual basis and may appear in DNR's [Forest Health Tracker](#).

Eligible Activities

Applications may include the following eligible activities:

- Forest stewardship planning
- Forest health general technical assistance
- Forest health projects (landowner implemented cost-share or District Implemented Projects).
- Conducting home ignition zone risk assessments
- Assisting existing or new communities with planning for the Firewise USA program, and assisting new and continuing Firewise USA® communities with maintaining or achieving formal recognition as a Firewise USA® community
- Education and outreach to landowners/communities about Firewise USA®, Wildfire Ready Neighbors, Fire Adapted Communities, Ready Set Go, or financial assistance opportunities to improve home/community wildfire resiliency such as but not limited to newsletters or articles.
- Post-fire technical assistance and outreach with impacted private landowners.
- Community Wildfire Preparedness Planning (CWPP) – coordination, assisting with coordination, participation, and/or serving as subject matter experts for plan developments or updates.
- Participation in the [Washington Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network](#)
- Forest health and fire resiliency projects, such as home/structure hardening (demonstration only), or home/community ignition zone defensible space projects, and other types of hazardous fuels reduction and forest health improvement projects (Landowner-implemented cost-share or Districted Implemented Projects).
- Public workshops, events, or presentations on forest health and wildfire risk management topics such as home hardening techniques, developing defensible space, wildfire risk awareness, family, and community emergency preparedness (Ready, Set, Go), lessons learned and sharing successful techniques, and other types of hazardous fuels reduction and forest health improvement learning opportunities.
- Forest health and fire risk management training for CD staff
- Equipment for district ownership and utilization directly tied to forest health and/or community wildfire resiliency work.
- Cost-share on equipment purchases will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Criteria for Prioritization of Applications

If more applications are received than the SCC has funding available, the following criteria will be considered to prioritize applications for funding:

1. Existing technical capacity and experienced staff at the district(s)
2. Leveraging of resources and capacity
3. Targeting of high priority geographic areas for work
4. Capacity building – hiring new staff or training.

The SCC reserves the right to offer a reduced funding award to applicants based upon available funding.

General Requirements

- 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.
- All project and practices must be completed in the funding time frame. The funding is granted on a biennial basis (for example: July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2025) therefore, all work and projects must be completed by the end of each biennium.
- Monthly grant vouchers are required. Refer to the [Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual](#) for further, detailed vouchering, cost share, and DIP rules.
- All projects must comply with the SCC cultural resources policy. Please refer to the [SCC cultural resources policy and procedures](#).
- Please submit a [Returned Funds form](#) as soon as it becomes clear that funds will not be utilized.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 20, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, Interim Executive Director

FROM: Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: Professional Engineering Grants Programmatic Guidelines

Action Item

X

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 and refine draft programmatic guidelines. However, a request to form a new engineering area came up that illustrated a lack of thoughtful criteria and a process to evaluate or approve such formation. Discussion of this request coupled with funding allocation methodology which would be impacted occurred at the May 18th SCC meeting, resulting in more information requested before Commissioners could make an informed decision on programmatic guidelines.

Requested Action (if action item):

Commissioners adopt the Professional Engineering grant guidelines as presented for FY24 implementation only and direct staff to continue work with conservation districts to further refine the draft programmatic guidelines to include a process and criteria for formation of new engineering areas, with an expectation that revised recommended guidelines are presented to Commissioners in the 4th quarter of FY24 for further action.

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 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 were presented first on March 16th. A review and comment period for all conservation districts was conducted from March 22nd through April 28th prior to a final set of recommend guidelines presented to Commissioners on May 18th. Several questions and concerns arose during discussion at the May 18th Commission meeting which tabled action on the programmatic guidelines at that time. SCC staff have conducted a survey of conservation districts to gather further information to help inform discussion on July 20th. A synthesis of survey results is attached for reference as well as an updated map of the current engineering areas. This information will also be presented by SCC staff on July 20th as well.

CD Engineering Areas

June 2023

CD Boundaries

Lead District

Central Klickitat

Franklin

Grays Harbor

Kittitas County

Mason

Pomeroy

Skagit

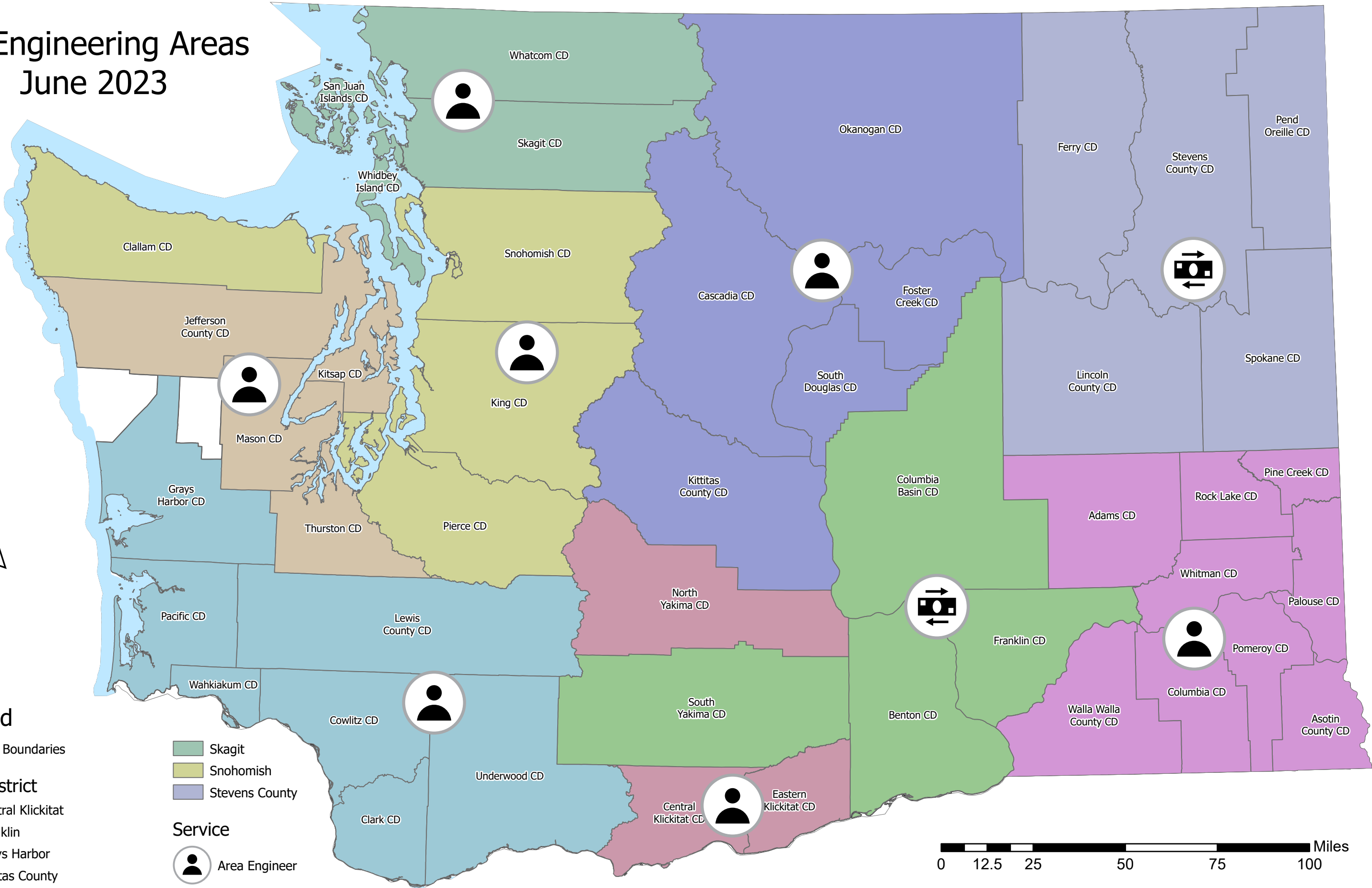
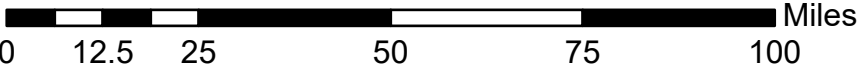
Snohomish

Stevens County

Service

Area Engineer

Contracting



Professional Engineering Survey of Conservation Districts

June 2023

Synthesis of survey responses

Number of Districts Responding:

- 25 or 56% of districts

Districts Responding:

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| • Adams | • Okanogan |
| • Benton | • Pacific |
| • Central Klickitat | • Pend Oreille |
| • Clark | • Pierce |
| • Eastern Klickitat | • Pomeroy |
| • Franklin | • Rock Lake |
| • Grays Harbor | • Skagit |
| • King | • Snohomish |
| • Kitsap | • Spokane |
| • Kittitas County | • Thurston |
| • Lewis | • Underwood |
| • Lincoln County | • Walla Walla County |
| • Mason | |

Does Your District Utilize/Access Engineering Services from an Area Engineer?

- **Yes:** 21
- **No:** 4 (Benton, Franklin, Spokane, Walla Walla)

Which Services Are You Utilizing from the District Engineer?

- Project Designs/Planning: 21
- Permitting: 16
- Surveying: 16
- Modeling: 13
- Construction Oversight: 15
- Construction/Installation Inspection: 21

If no, why are you not utilizing the services of an area engineer?

- Engineer does not have appropriate expertise: (3)
- **Other:** Our NE Engineering group has chosen to hire out individual contracts due to conflicts of time and priorities that occur.
- **Other:** KCD uses our cluster engineering group, however our demand for engineering outpaces the availability of those engineering services. In those case we use a contracted engineering company.

Has your district contracted out for professional engineering services in the last two years?

- Yes: 22
- No: 3

What type of projects does your district engage in that commonly require the services of a professional engineer?

- In-stream/river restoration/bank stabilization/levy removal or re-location: 23
- Manure storage structures, lagoons, waste storage tanks, nutrient management: 16
- Irrigation efficiencies or upgrades: 15
- No Response: 1

Do you regularly include funds for engineering services as part of grant applications?

- Yes: 20
- No: 4
- No Response: 1

If you are a “host district” for a cooperative engineering area, do you have agreements in place to share your engineering capacity to other CDs outside of your engineering area?

- Yes: 8
- No: 3

If yes, how many other CDs do you have agreements with?

- 2 (1)
- 3 (2)
- 4 (1)
- 6 (1)
- 9 (3)

Does your district employ a professional engineer or engineer-in-training that is not part of the organized cooperative engineering area?

- Yes: 4
- No: 20
- No Response: 1

Currently, there are 9 organized cooperative engineering areas (clusters) in Washington. Does your district support the formation of new cooperative engineering areas in the state?

- Yes: 13
- No: 9
- No Response: 3

- **Why:**

- We support organizing clusters to support existing district engineers in the most effective way. If that means adding a cluster or two, we support that. However, we do not support the unrestricted creation of new clusters. The paradigm under which these clusters were initially created no longer works for everyone involved. Funding should first go where it is needed to make whole districts with existing engineering staff, whether or not they are a cluster engineer. If there is additional funding remaining, then funds should be distributed to areas looking to add

staff. We support an examination of the engineers who are currently employed by districts and who have contracts with multiple districts, no matter which grant they are paid under. We support a reevaluation of the effectiveness of existing areas: How many projects have they created designs for in the last 24 months? If they are especially complex designs, perhaps there is another metric that could be used? How many districts have they completed designs for in the past 24 months, number of site visits for engineering, how many current active projects do they have, how many FTEs work in the engineering cluster (not including administration). The creation of clusters without much official oversight allows for the exploitation of the cluster model. When the clusters work, they work well, but that isn't always the case and there is little recourse when things aren't working. We don't suggest the Commission oversees engineers. Still, since the cluster funds should cover multiple districts but are assigned to one, perhaps there could be a way for districts to confidentially provide feedback on the effectiveness of the engineer/host district on a regular basis.

- Our current cluster engineers have a very high demand for their services across their districts. Our need for engineering services is greater than the capacity available. While they do a great job and do their best to help everyone with their needs, a project can sometimes take years for a design to be completed. In addition, many of our projects require the services of a geotechnical engineer to determine project feasibility on steep slopes. This isn't a service that the cluster engineers provide.
- We support additional areas if there is a need. We feel we are receiving adequate engineering services at this time though.
- The more engineering capacity the districts can utilize the better.
- If you can prove that it is needed.
- Our cluster engineer was pulled away to help the Kittitas CD on contract at a very critical time for us- during the 11th hour of implementing NRI projects. Several of our NRI funded project will now not be completed in time and will have to pause and re-apply for 2023-2024 NRI funding. Even with two new engineers, our cluster engineer seems to have too much on his plate to be taking on outside cluster work.
- Yes, it is important to have support for areas that currently struggle with engineering or engineering capacity. Having more clusters can greatly increase productivity and product capability.
- The current availability of engineering services for CD's in Washington is not adequate for the number of projects districts have that require an engineer.
- Project demands exceed our area engineer's capacity to complete in a timely fashion. Adding an additional engineering cluster may provide the opportunity to invite additional skill sets. We would hope that the creation of a new engineering cluster would not negatively impact funding for the existing clusters or the services they provide at this time.
- This actually depends on why the new areas are being formed. The Spokane CD would support it if it does not negatively impact funding to other areas.
- CD's have grown in capacity tremendously and hiring an in-house engineer is not feasible for smaller CDs. Clusters or shared positions should be made where it makes sense. That said, funding for clusters should be divided equally based on how many CDs are participating the cluster. (2 CDs = 2 x \$, 5 CDs = 5 x \$) The reality is, smaller clusters will need to have enough money to be able to put it towards funding a full-time engineer. Larger clusters will often need to hire surveying techs or EITs to assist 1 engineer covering such a large geography. Either way you slice it, the need is the same and the funding needs to be increased. Personally, I would like to see cluster engineering time written into all WSCC funding programs, and not just relying on the PEG to fully support time. Having the grant program for in-house engineers is just as vital to cover activities that are underfunded or unfunded by other sources. A good example is

preliminary design work that makes funding applications shovel-ready and highly competitive. Our CD uses both our cluster engineer and surveying team, along with our in-house engineer. They work together, collaborate, co-mentor, and support each other with their different areas of expertise. Engineering is a big field, and there is no way CDs can get by with just one flavor (just a structural engineer, or just a hydrological engineer, etc.).

- Yes, we support the formation of new areas where there is a documented need (such as existing engineering staff), workload and proven accountability. We don't support the unrestricted creation of new engineering areas. More specifically, we support the formation of at least one new area where we have an existing engineer on staff. Underwood CD employs a fully-licensed professional engineer with 11 years of district experience. UCD is a member of the SW Area Engineering Cluster. Engineering services within the SW Area are provided by the P.E. employed by UCD and by the P.E. employed by Gray's Harbor CD (host district). The P.E. employed by UCD also provides engineering services to North Yakima CD, Okanogan CD and Columbia CD via MOU. The SW Engineering Cluster has a fantastic working relationship between member districts and two highly-qualified, productive, accountable, and fully-licensed engineers. The request to create a 10th engineering area is based on documented workload, need and positive, productive work history. The project list for the SW Area is robust and requires at least two engineers to accomplish in a timely manner. Additional project funds are sought to leverage SCC PE funds, but these are inadequate to support two engineers. The vague concept of "fully-funding" any engineering area is unrealistic due to the endless demand and need for projects (in the SW Area and likely across the state), but in SW Washington the 10th area would allow the cluster to split into two coordinated areas and provide an increased level of service within SW Washington and state-wide by continuing to provide engineering services where needed via MOU. The 10th area may include 3-4 participating districts. UCD already serves multiple other CDs, currently 10, 7 of which are in the SW Engineering Area. UCD already serves the function of a host district by employing an engineer that participates in the organized cooperative engineering area as well as serves districts across the state. UCD is serving the function of a host district, fulfilling the intentions and purposes of SCC's PE program in an exemplar manner, without receiving SCC PE funding intended to support host districts.
- Formation of a new engineering area should be based on the need of that area. Often, I am unable to use my area cluster engineer because of the skills/expertise required for the project but I am also unable to monopolize on other CD area engineers because their workload is full. Forming a new cluster may be helpful but expanding our current engineering abilities (IBC compliant plans, CADD drafter) to help with current needs would be preferred. Currently, my CD would not be able to use the SCC engineering funds if they are solely dedicated to engineering areas.

○ **Why Not:**

- It would reduce the amount of funding for our area.
- Engineering program supporters have worked to increase funding for over a decade. Now that funding has increased the existing programs should have the opportunity to be fully established and provide services before reducing funding levels to the benefit of 1 or 2 regions at a cost to all others. UCD opted out of the regional engineering program voluntarily with staff and the UCD board refusing to allow discussion on the regional engineering. UCD assured the conservation partners in that region it would not reduce their funding. Now UCD is seeking to reduce all 9 regions funding for their internal program. The conservation family should work together to find solutions that don't negatively impact the majority to benefit the few.
- Forming new districts reduces the economy of scale and efficiency the engineering program was designed to accomplish. The program needs to support engineering teams across the state

rather than be split up and reduce funding to only support 2 staff members. Fund the existing 9 programs at a higher level to get more return on investment.

- Unless there is additional funding it would dilute the funding, we have available in our area.
- Dilutes efforts to develop engineering programs in current cluster areas.
- My true answer is "I don't know". I am open to this and support the need for an additional engineer to support SW. However, is this the only area request? What if others requests come about after this first request is approved? What criteria will be used? How many is too many before the funding is too diluted for anyone to be successful. Our cluster survived for a long time with less funding. However, the bottom line is that even with the increased funding levels we will not have our engineer and engineering technician fully funded. We will continue to subsidize our engineering program with additional grants, contracts, etc. The current estimated annual cost of our engineer + tech + overhead + admin support is \$460,000. This cost is expected to increase every year.
- Why? Our cluster worked until we couldn't afford to pay our engineer at a level to keep him employed with us. We have enjoyed a very successful engineering cluster arrangement. The only way I could support a reorganization of engineer clusters is because funding was increased enough to hire a minimum of one engineer per two conservation districts to share.
- This will further divide funding availability, which is already limited considering the huge potential expense of in-stream/bank work to be performed with the riparian grant funding. If separate CDs don't want to work with other CDs in their area, making the remaining funding available via application to regional managers is the next best option.
- Possibly open to the option with additional information and justification. However, increased number of engineering areas means a decrease in funds for existing areas. Our engineering project workload already far exceeds the funding allocated. Through project prioritization, many projects get less engineer assistance than desired.

○ **Other:**

- Ambivalent, the more important question is: 45 CD's divided by 9 should produce 5 CD's per cluster, is that the case? My cluster, as of right now, has 7 CD's in it. Which cluster ('s) have less? In a perfect world, every CD would have as many engineers it needs, but that is not the real world, so decisions have to be made. These decisions should be as equitable as possible. In addition: the next question cannot be answered until there is a decision on if there will be more clusters, however my answer is based on current situation. (2)

The legislative appropriation of operating funds to the SCC is currently \$2,700,000 million per fiscal year on an ongoing basis for engineering. Please choose the option most preferred by your CD:

- 1. Allocate all available funds equally among existing (9) engineering areas - results in \$300,000 per engineering area per fiscal year: **8**
- 2. Allocate available funds to engineering areas (9) at the amount of \$250,000 per fiscal year and make available remaining funds and any returned funding for supplemental requests from any CD or engineering area: **17**

Proposed allocation methodologies for PE grant funding if new engineering areas are allowed to form. Please choose the option most preferred by your CD:

- Allocate all available funds to engineering areas at a set amount of \$250,000 per engineering area (effectively caps the number of engineering areas that may exist to 10 with the current appropriation level) and make available remaining funds and any returned funding for supplemental requests from any CD or engineering area.: **17**
- Other: **8**

○ **Other thoughts:**

- Facilitate a discussion about the establishment of new engineering areas after the current programs have opportunity to become established and provide engineering services. After the programs are staff and functioning survey CD engineering needs and use that information to meet with the regional engineering program leads to determine if the WSCC-CD program can meet those needs or if another area meets the greater good of all or if there is another solution to meet unmet needs. Take a measured and informed approach to identify any problems and fund equitable solutions.
- Forming more areas and splitting the funding more ways is an effort by a few individuals to increase their funding at the cost of others. Don't allow increased funds to benefit a few without supporting the existing programs first. If engineering staff are hired on outside of the engineering program that should be worked out locally and supported by grant funds. The independent establishment of single CD engineering programs shouldn't impact the long established statewide programs.
- Cannot answer without dealing with the number of CD's per cluster.
- Is it possible to be more flexible in the allocation, potentially based on demand or service (geotech v irrigation v design) or district size?
- I would support adding another area, but am wondering if other areas will be thinking "why did they get the additional engineer?" ... we need one too... etc, etc. If this isn't an issue then I would support adding the one new area.
- Do not dilute the funding further than \$250,000 per engineering cluster. We have struggled to recruit and retain engineers because we have had such poor funding. We need qualified and competent engineers who understand the breadth of work conservation districts help landowners complete. The level of education and experience we need in engineers requires us to offer commensurate salaries and benefits.
- Without addressing the number of CD's per cluster this question cannot be answered.
- As stated above, funding should be based on the number of CDs in the cluster. Ensuring the baseline amount is sufficient for the smallest clusters (2 CDs) to have sufficient funding to build a position around. Outside funding sources should be used (like any other position) to fully fund each cluster. Support for in-house engineers is essential to growing CD capacity, and perhaps the future for most CDs. WSCC needs to seek additional resources to support CDs' growth in sophistication and the size, volume, and complexity of their projects growing as well. Not to mention, finding CD engineers is hard and we're competing with the private sector for uncommon expertise. Training and development funds are necessary to ensure we can generate our own pipeline of engineers.

From: bybucd@gmail.com
To: [Joy, Shana \(SCC\)](#); [Giuntoli, Josh \(SCC\)](#)
Cc: [Tova Tillinghast](#); [Carly Lemon](#)
Subject: Engineering Clusters
Date: Friday, May 26, 2023 9:46:58 AM
Attachments: [Carly work summary.pdf](#)

We at UCD are heartened by the thoughtful approach the Commission is taking to consider the funding and potential expansion of engineering clusters.

UCD is a proud member of the SW Area Engineering Group. The SW Area is currently served by Gavin Glore, P.E., hosted by Grays Harbor CD, and Carly Lemon, P.E., an employee of Underwood CD. The SW Area Group is lucky enough to have two engineers serving seven ambitious CD's. Workload is split between Gavin and Carly based on volume of projects, workload, geography and specialization. Carly works primarily with Underwood and Clark CDs within the SW Engineering Area and is also working on several projects with North Yakima CD, Columbia CD, and Okanogan CD.

We are pleased to offer Carly as a resource for this work, but it does come at a cost to us as we are not generally able to recoup our administrative costs, such as cost of liability insurance, and for a portion of Carly's work we have been unable to recoup overhead costs. The request to create a 10th engineering area with UCD as the host district is based on our documented workload and a desire to continue to put high quality projects on the ground as efficiently as possible. As host of an engineering cluster, we would be confident of offering Carly the challenge and opportunity to continue to grow here at UCD while supporting work around the state.

I want to tell you a bit about Carly, who has been with UCD for eleven years. Carly has a Master's Degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering and is a fully licensed Professional Engineer in the State of Washington. Carly is a well-rounded district employee with training and work experience on district projects related to livestock, nutrient management, stream restoration, irrigation, and fish passage. She is responsive, diligent, and meets deadlines; she managed her workload without a hiccup while preparing for her PE licensing exam. We enthusiastically supported Carly's pursuit of her Professional Engineer license, given her strong performance and the urgent need for this resource in our area and statewide. We are pleased that her position as a PE coincidentally represents a step forward in DEI in a largely male-dominated profession. If you talk to Carly's client base, I'm confident you will hear that she is a hard-working, no-drama professional and team player who gets along with people from all walks. I've attached a summary of her work within the last year as well as some of her project plans for the upcoming year.

UCD – now 18 years under the steady hand of District Director Tova Tillinghast – has an extraordinary track record of attracting and retaining outstanding staff. This is key to stability in providing services. It is not something we take for granted, and we continue to seek ways to cement our relationship with staff, such as our initiative last year to join PERS. UCD also works to contribute to the success of conservation in the state more broadly. We are proud to have Jan Thomas serving as CTD co-Chair, and I am pleased to have served WACD these past few years, first as Area Representative and currently as Secretary. UCD was delighted to be recognized last fall as District of the Year in our area – thank you! We are steadily making great headway increasing our capabilities and contribution to conservation, locally and state-wide. The Commission's support has been instrumental throughout. We appreciate you two personally, and the organization as a whole.

As you gauge the scale of work within existing clusters to help the Commission in its decision-making process, I hope you consider not only project lists and backlog, but also processes and results. You have quarterly minutes/project list updates from the SW Area Engineering Control Board and other clusters, as well as documentation of project progress and completion; these might be useful in judging the health of communications within clusters and how well cluster members are served.

Stability in funding is critical to stability of service. At the same time, Commissioners are considering whether the make-up of the clusters, in terms of the number of partnering districts and/or the appropriate proportion of total available funding, might benefit from more fluidity if long-term

trends in resources or demand suggest a need for fine-tuning from time to time. This seems wise; we are committed to excellence in process and results and are glad to have whatever resources, partnering districts, and oversight the Commission feels appropriate.

I wish you the best in your work to shed light for the Commissioners on how to fund the engineering needs of all CDs in a way that is stable but not stagnant. We hope the Commission will see fit to add a tenth engineering cluster and are most grateful to be considered as its Administering District. Regardless of the outcome, we will work hard to be a resource you can count on to support the engineering and other state-wide needs of the Commission and the forty-five Conservation Districts.

I hope you will look at Carly's attached workload summary which shows, I think, an impressive standard of professionalism and productivity. Let me, Tova or Carly know if you need any additional information as you support the Commission in its decision-making process. Thank you for your consideration.

Barbara Bailey
Chair, Underwood Conservation District
509/310-3959

Workload Summary for Carly Lemon

Summary of Previous 12 Months	Preliminary Design	Permit Design	Fully Implemented
Pearson Streambank Stabilization	x	x	x
Slavens Turtle Ponds	x	x	x
Murillo Spring Protection	x	x	Summer 2023
White Salmon Irrigation District Metering, new meter install	x	x	x
Little Wind River Phase V	x	x	
Home Valley Water District Metering TA	x	x	x
Rattlesnake Creek Stream Habitat Wood Placement	x		
Purdin Ditch Fish Passage, headworks, fish screen, pipeline	x	x	Fall 2023
Priority Area 26 Tucannon River Hydraulic Modeling	x	x	
Priority Area 34 Tucannon River Hydraulic Modeling	x	x	
Stability Analysis for Large Wood Placement, PA26 and PA34	x	x	
Chewuch Canal 15cfs pipeline - initial site visit			
Fairbanks roof runoff and manure management	x	x	x
Williams waste storage facility and riparian restoration	x	x	Summer 2023
Hill waste storage facility	x	x	Summer 2023

Summary of Upcoming 12 months
Design Hollis Creek Fish Passage under Wind River Hwy, culvert removal and bridge installation over on Wind River Hwy
Design Pearson Phase 2 floodplain enhancement
Purdin Ditch, advance to final design, contracting with construction oversight in Fall 2023 (\$2+ million project)
Rattlesnake Creek stream habitat, advance to final design
Chewuch Canal Piping - advance to 60% design
Design Buncome Hollow Fish Passage - Culvert removal and bridge install through FFFPP, summer 2024 construction
Design Ichikawa Waste Storage Facility
Home Valley Water District - TA related to system operations and mapping
Mountain Meadows Dairy solids/liquids separator
Design Haney Waste Storage Facility

Color Key
Underwood CD
Clark CD
North Yakima CD
Columbia CD
Okanogan CD

Professional Engineering Grants Programmatic Guidelines

July 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, and
- 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.

In the 2022 legislative session, general operating funds were “*provided solely for the commission to make available to local conservation districts for project engineering services to enable permit and design work for conservation projects.*”

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 no less than \$250,000 per fiscal year. Any cooperating engineering area may opt to request less funding if the full amount cannot be utilized.

- ~~It is SCC's intent to evaluate this funding allocation methodology on an annual basis. SCC may elect to fully allocate all available program funds only to cooperating engineering areas in future fiscal years if it is determined that district needs may be met with that approach. If one or more additional cooperating engineering areas are formed, the amount of funds available to be allocated to each cooperating engineering area may be reduced.~~

Professional Engineers

Inter-Local Agreements (ILA)

Liability for Professional Engineers

1

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.

Forming a Cooperating Engineering Area

~~Currently, the number of cooperative engineering areas is capped at nine until further work is concluded to establish a set process and criteria by which to evaluate requests to form a new engineering area or re-organize existing engineering areas. A group of conservation districts may choose to form a new cooperating engineering area. Cooperating districts must complete a new Inter-local Agreement, request in writing that the new engineering area be recognized by the SCC for PE grant purposes, and formally withdraw from any prior cooperating engineering areas included within. The SCC does not guarantee that new cooperating engineering areas will be recognized or provided with PE grant funding.~~

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 \$2,500 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 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 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 year. Also, each applicable AEC must be informed of and approve of all such purchases over

\$2,500 and this information must be included in the grant addendum form. If an equipment purchase over \$2,500 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 professional engineering program 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 a [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

July 20, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, SCC Interim Executive Director

FROM: Mike Baden, NC and NE Regional Manager

SUBJECT: Petition for Inclusion of the City of Omak into the Okanogan Conservation District

Action Item

☒

Informational Item

☐

Summary:

The incorporated City of Omak as well as the Okanogan Conservation District Board of Supervisors have approved a petition for Omak to be annexed into the Okanogan Conservation District. The District and City, pursuant to RCW 89.08 and established procedure, have submitted the attached *Petition for Inclusion of Additional Territory within the Okanogan Conservation District*.

Requested Action (if action item):

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

Staff Contact:

Mike Baden, mbaden@scc.wa.gov, 509.385.7510

**PETITION FOR INCLUSION OF ADDITIONAL TERRITORY
WITHIN THE
OKANOGAN 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 Omak and the Okanogan Conservation District, respectfully represent:

- First: That heretofore the Okanogan 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 Okanogan Conservation District.
- Third: That the territory proposed for inclusion within the said district includes substantially the following:

Incorporated City of Omak

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 Okanogan Conservation District.

RESOLUTION NO. 53-2023

**A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE A PETITION FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE
REMAINING PORTION OF THE OMAK INCORPORATED TERRITORY INTO THE
OKANOGAN CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

WHEREAS, The Okanogan Conservation District is empowered to preserve and protect the lands, to promote the health and, safety and general welfare of its people; and

WHEREAS, RCW 89.080.10 encourages incorporated cities to participate in the practices, programs and projects of the state conservation commission and the conservation districts, and provides a petitions method for annexation into adjacent conservation district; and

WHEREAS, Omak Incorporated territory east of the Okanogan River has been previously included in the Okanogan Conservation District and the city is petitioning for the inclusion of the remaining portion west and north of the Okanogan River.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OMAK, that the Petition for the inclusion of the remaining portion of the City of Omak incorporated territory into the Okanogan Conservation District, attached here to as exhibit "A," is approved.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 15th day of May, 2023.

SIGNED:

Cindy Gagné
Cindy Gagné, Mayor

ATTEST:

Connie Thomas
Connie Thomas, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Michael Howe
Michael Howe, City Attorney

Okanogan Conservation District

Loal Alf
Chair

[Signature]
Vice Chair

Absent
Auditor

[Signature]
Member

Vacant
Member

Date Approved: 6/1/2023

City of Omak

[Signature]
Mayor

[Signature]
Council Member

[Signature]
Council Member

[Signature]
Council Member

[Signature]
Council Member

[Signature]
Council Member

[Signature]
Council Member

Date Approved: 5.15.2023



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 20, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, SCC Interim-Executive Director

FROM: Jon K Culp, Water Resources Program Manager

SUBJECT: IEGP Program Policy Recommendation from the Steering Committee

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

Summary:

Staff propose changing Guidelines of the Irrigation Efficiency Grants Program to adopt recommendations from interested conservation districts and the Efficiencies Steering Committee. The changes are proposed to enhance program accessibility and maximum water resource benefit.

The proposed changes would apply to the legislative appropriation for the Irrigation Efficiencies Grants Program for the present biennium. The re-appropriation of the funds from the previous biennium must comply with the two provisions not required under the new proposed language. Projects funded with reappropriation funding must place a prorated portion of the saved water into the state's Trust Water Rights Program (TWRP) for instream flow only, and are subject to the old 85% cost share rate cap. The new guidelines proposal looks to the TWRP on a case-by-case basis where placing water savings into the trust would create or preserve the public benefit gained by a funded project. The proposed cost share rate would be to align with the commission's general cost share policy.

Staff brings this to you for your initial review, input, revision, and approval to send out for a 30-day comment period for the conservation districts.

Requested Action (if action item):

Forward to conservation districts for 30-day comment period

Staff Contact:

Jon K Culp, Water Resources Program Manager jculp@scc.wa.gov

Background and Discussion:

The Irrigation Efficiencies Grants Program began in 2001 out of that year's drought as a way to minimize the impact of irrigated agriculture on low streamflow in critical streams across the state. A diverse steering committee formed to develop general direction and initial guidance of the program. Several times through the life of the program, the steering committee has been reconvened to address the changing needs of the customers and resources. Major revisions of the guidance were made in 2006, 2011, and 2019.

In June 2017, the steering committee came together in Ellensburg to discuss and strategize the future direction of the program. In 2019, the legislature changed the appropriation from Ecology's Water Resource Program budget to the Commission's.

During the 2023 session, the legislature re-appropriated unencumbered funds and appropriated an additional \$2M for program implementation. They also adopted a revised budget proviso through the budget decision package process.

The steering committee convened on March 3rd to discuss options for refocusing the program for geographic parity, additional local water resource concerns, and equity.

Recommended Action:

Staff forward for your consideration the attached programmatic guideline recommendation from the program's steering committee and vetted, in draft by committee members, SCC finance, regional management, and other staff.

Staff recommends approval to send the draft guidelines out for the 30-day comment period to conservation districts.

Staff would then return to your next regular business meeting to discuss received comments, options identified, and a recommendation on final adoption.

Water Resource Irrigation Efficiencies Programmatic Guidelines

Draft – June 2023

Program Background

The Irrigation Efficiencies Grants Program (IEGP) has been saving water for people, farms, and fish, since 2002. The program was created during the legislative session in 2001. It made funding available for conservation districts to conserve irrigation water through efficiency upgrades to conveyance systems (ditches) and application systems (flood/furrow/sprinkler). Water rights associated with the water savings were transferred to the state's Trust Water Rights Program for instream flows only. The saved water was to stay in stream for the benefit of salmonids listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The target area of priority was identified as the 16 Salmon Critical Basins as designated in the 1999 *Washington Statewide Strategy to Recover Salmon*. Through adaptive management and additional water resource concerns, the target area expanded to include other water short basins until 2021, this program was funded by a legislative appropriation to the Department of Ecology's Water Resource Section and contracted through an interagency agreement to the Commission. Last biennium, the appropriation came directly to the Commission with the inherited proviso language focused on instream flow enhancement only. This biennium, the Commission revised its proviso language in order to address other water resource issues.

The current proviso language:

- (1) The appropriation is provided solely for technical assistance and grants to conservation districts for the purpose of implementing water conservation measures and irrigation efficiencies. The state conservation commission shall give preference to projects located in the sixteen fish critical basins, other water-short or drought impacted basins, and basins with significant water resource and instream flow issues. Projects that are not within the basins described in this subsection are also eligible to receive funding.
- (2) Conservation districts statewide are eligible for grants listed in subsection (1) of this section. A conservation district receiving funds shall manage each grant to ensure that a portion of the water saved by the water conservation measure or irrigation efficiency will be available for other instream and out-of-stream uses and users. The proportion of saved water made available for other uses and users must be equal to the percentage of the public investment in the conservation measure or irrigation efficiency.

Program Rules

Eligibility to Receive Funds

conservation districts that meet all of the Accountability requirements under the [Conservation Accountability and Performance Program](#) (CAPP) are eligible to receive funds.

Irrigation Efficiencies Grants Program technical assistance funds related to program marketing and assessment of potential projects will be allocated to requesting conservation districts at the beginning of each fiscal year. Then, for pre-approved project proposals, the program manager will award additional technical assistance funds to design, develop, and administer the implementation of a project.

The IEGP financial assistance funds for approved projects are allocated to conservation districts on a first come, first served basis. Each district is limited to two funded projects per fiscal year. Additional projects may be authorized, by the project manager, based on the availability of funds, identified need, a districts past productivity within this program, delivery of project or project benefits to Underserved Farmers and Ranchers, or other high priority consideration.

To apply for technical or financial assistance funding, districts will need to submit an [IEGP Application Form](#) (*this linked form is under development*). Each project requires a new application form. The approved project data must be entered into the CPDS in order to be awarded funding.

Financial assistance funding will be awarded after the applications are reviewed by IEGP program manager and SCC financial staff for complete information and adherence to program guidelines.

Throughout each biennium, IEGP program staff will interact with each conservation district awarded IEGP funding to ascertain project progress. Districts must work with the program manager and Cc their regional manager, in order to add, modify or remove projects after the initial IEGP grant award. SCC fiscal staff will send a formal notice of grant amendment to confirm the addition, modification, or removal of a project. For the addition of a project or award of technical assistance, expenditure of funds may not begin prior to the district receiving this notice of grant amendment.

A cap on funding per application may be set, if necessary.

All work, including any cost-share or DIP projects, must be completed by the end of each biennium, on June 30, 2025, and every odd-numbered year, thereafter (27, 29, etc.).

In order to receive project reimbursement, project completion information must be entered into the Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS).

Funding Criteria

The following criteria will be considered when awarding program funds:

- Projects located in areas where water availability is a high-priority natural resource concern. The priority may be identified by:
 - the district's long-range plan and/or annual plan of work
 - local watershed, salmon recovery, or drought response and mitigation plan
 - other local, multi-stakeholder resource plan
- Projects must save water in consideration of:
 - instream flow protection or enhancement
 - water quality protection or enhancement
 - mitigation of a drought vulnerability
 - improving productivity or profitability on lands under threat of

- conversion to non-agricultural uses
 - flow and/or water supply retiming
- Conveyance/Purveyor projects require water savings to be eligible for protection in the State's Trust Water Rights Program (TWR). On a case-by-case basis, the Program Manager may require a transfer of saved water to the TWR when management of the saved water by the state is necessary to create or preserve the public benefit created by the project. Contact the Program Manager prior to applying for these projects.

Other Funding Considerations

- Districts are encouraged to leverage funds and other resources with local entities/agencies.
- Districts are encouraged to partner and coordinate with local stakeholders, including Tribes and other natural resource co-managers.
- Projects that directly or indirectly benefit Underserved Farmers and Ranchers will receive higher consideration for funding.
- Projects must be designed to consider the impacts of climate change to the project area over the design life of the best management practices.

Reporting

- A district that is allocated funds must provide an annual report no later than July 10, of the following fiscal year. The annual report form, including required metrics and deliverables is located here: [IEGP Report Form](#) (*this will be modified for IEGP*).

General Requirements

- On-farm projects are cost-share projects, thus must comply with SCC cost-share policies. Alternatively, they may qualify for implementation according to District Implemented Project (DIP) policies. Maximum cost-share for on-farm projects is \$100,000 per landowner per fiscal year, in accordance with *The Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedures Manual*.
- On-farm projects require an Irrigation Water Management Plan
- For conveyance projects to a delivery system in which a water purveyor (irrigation water provider such as an irrigation district, company, or association) is the recipient and owner of the infrastructure, there is no cost share maximum. These recipients are limited to one cost share project per biennium. SCC cost-share and DIP policies do not apply to water purveyor projects.
- All best management practices (BMPs) must meet Natural Resource Conservation Service (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*.
- The District Implemented Project (DIP) process may be used to fund some projects that meet the criteria. Please consult with the Program Manager and Regional Manager prior to filling out the project application.
- All projects must be completed by the end of each biennium.

[Procedure Manual](#) for further, detailed vouchering, cost share, and DIP rules.

- All projects must comply with the SCC cultural resources policy. Please refer to the SCC cultural resources policy and procedures. Cultural resource work will be funded with the district's technical assistance allocation. Costs exceeding the initial allocation can request additional TA using the IEGP Application Form.
- Most often, water conserved through the increase in efficient delivery or application is non-consumptive in nature. That is, that it was never consumed by the crop served. It is most often lost in the delivery of water consumptively used by the crops in the project area. Because of this, water saved under this program are rarely available for use under the original water right. Using the conserved water under the original water right, after the system upgrade may be considered spreading and potentially illegal under state law. Please consult with the Program Manager for basic water rights assistance.

Eligible Activities

Applications may include the following eligible activities:

- Irrigation application systems
- Irrigation conveyance systems
- Variable Frequency Drive (VFD)
- Roof runoff collection and storage
- Irrigation water storage, reregulating, and retiming
- Irrigation or stockwater well
- Ground water recharge
- Water resource/conservation outreach and education
- Irrigation and stockwater right outreach and education
- Urban water conservation outreach and education
- Irrigation system component refurbishment
- Weather stations for localized/shared Irrigation Water Management or Scientific Irrigation Scheduling
- Urban agricultural practices such as: heritage gardens, scalable soil moisture collection, irrigation, and etc.
- Green energy power with eligible projects
- Fish screens with eligible projects
- Irrigation water management plans
- Water banking*(These projects require a pre-application consultation with the Program Manager to discuss project eligibility)
- Upland practices that reduce water demand* (These projects require a pre-application consultation with the Program Manager to discuss project eligibility)

*May require further discussion or research.

Application Potential Efficiency Ranges

- Flood Irrigation 30-60%
- Furrow 50-80%
- Hand/Wheel Line 60-85%
- Center Pivot 75-85%
- Lateral Move 75-95%

- Micro-spinner 70-95%
- Drip 75-90%
- Pivot with LEPA 80-98% efficient

END



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 20, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, SCC Interim Executive Director

FROM: Jean Fike, Puget Sound Regional Manager

SUBJECT: Disaster Assistance Program (DAP) draft revised guidelines

Action Item

☒

Informational Item

☐

Summary:

Conservation Commission (Commission) staff propose revised Disaster Assistance Program (DAP) guidelines for consideration.

Requested Actions:

That the Commission authorize staff to distribute these draft guidelines for comment.

DAP Background

During the 2022 legislative session, the Washington State Legislature amended the Commission's enabling statute¹ and appropriated \$600,000 in funds (\$300,000 for FY 2022, and \$300,000 for FY 2023) for the Commission to create a disaster assistance program (DAP) initially to respond to the atmospheric river disaster in Whatcom County November-December 2021.

As well as providing financial assistance to impacted producers, the Legislature required the Commission to coordinate with the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and local conservation districts to conduct outreach to farmers and ranchers in order to increase awareness and understanding of the DAP, and to ensure that farmers and ranchers are aware of other disaster relief assistance available through the state and federal government.

As directed by the Legislature, the first iteration of the DAP was focused on the Whatcom County disaster from November-December 2021. The Whatcom Conservation District conducted extensive outreach, supported applicants through the process, vetted requests and documentation and then processed the awards. An advisory committee comprised of a Whatcom Conservation District Supervisor who is also a farmer, WSDA's Emergency Management Program Manager, the

Regional Manager and an industry group representative made recommendations to the Commission Executive Director who made the final decision on grant funding.

In September of 2022 the Commissioners approved minor updates to the DAP guidelines that allowed the work with Whatcom CD to continue while opening the door to use of funds for additional disasters during FY 2023. The Commission did not elect to use DAP for other disasters in FY 2023 and the remaining funds were awarded to applicants impacted by the 2021 disaster in Whatcom County. Final numbers are still coming in but very nearly the entire \$600,000 allocated by the legislature was awarded. Without the District's outstanding partnership, this would not have been possible.

Summary of Proposed Changes

By statute, the Commission was to focus first on addressing the flooding disaster that occurred in Whatcom County in late 2021. Statutory language allows the SCC then to make DAP available state-wide. The proposed changes are designed to support use of the program statewide to respond to future natural disasters affecting farmers and ranchers.

Specific changes include:

- Removal of reference to the original 2021 atmospheric river event and to Whatcom County
- A process whereby the Commission would activate DAP in response to future disasters
- Description of how Districts would work with the Commission to conduct outreach and make these funds available to affected farmers and ranchers
- Clarification and streamlining of process/language

The legislature awarded \$600,000 in the upcoming biennium and provided a staff position to oversee this work.

A final version of revised guidelines is planned to come back to Commissioners for action in September. We also plan to initiate rulemaking for this program in the upcoming fiscal year.

Staff Contact:

Jean Fike, jfike@scc.wa.gov, 360-764-0533

1. Program Background

The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC), following direction from the legislature, has established this short-term disaster recovery financial assistance program ("program") for farmers and ranchers sustaining physical damage or financial loss as a result of a natural disaster. It may partially reimburse eligible disaster recovery expenses or fund the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that restore and/or increase resiliency.

[RCW 89.08.645](#) requires SCC to coordinate with the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and local conservation districts to conduct outreach to farmers and ranchers to increase awareness and understanding of the program and to ensure that farmers and ranchers are aware of other disaster relief assistance available through the state and federal government.

SCC has established these programmatic guidelines to provide guidance on how to award any available financial assistance to farmers and ranchers following natural disasters designated by SCC when the program becomes activated. These guidelines also ensure that farmers and ranchers know how to access federal disaster assistance programs.

These guidelines may be amended in response to feedback from interested stakeholders, additional legislative direction, or developing circumstances as the Program is implemented.

2. 2023 Proviso language

One-time funding is provided solely to support the continued development of the disaster assistance program established in RCW 89.08.645, which provides short-term financial support for farmers and ranchers during disasters. Funding must be prioritized for farmers and ranchers who are most economically vulnerable.

3. Definitions

- **Farmer:** Any person, firm, partnership, or corporation engaged in farming. If a person, firm, partnership, or corporation is engaged in activities in addition to that of farming, the definition shall only apply to that portion of the activity that is defined as farming in [RCW 46.04.183](#).
- **Farming:** The cultivation and tillage of the soil, dairying, the production, cultivation, growing, and harvesting of any agricultural or horticultural commodities (except forestry or forestry operations), the raising of livestock, bees, fur-bearing animals, or poultry, and any practices performed on a farm as an incident to or in conjunction with such farming operations.
- **Rancher:** A person who owns a ranch and who raises livestock as an occupation.
- **Livestock:** Includes, but is not limited to horses, mules, cattle, sheep, swine, and goats.

4. Program Activation

The intention of the program is to respond to major events affecting significant numbers of farmers and/or ranchers. Given the administrative costs involved, smaller, isolated events are not a good fit for this program. For consideration under this program, a minimum of 20 farmers and/or ranchers shall have suffered losses to their farming/ranching operation, and total losses estimated to be well in excess of \$100,000.

The Executive Committee of the SCC may designate a disaster or disasters for use of the DAP program, or they may refer the question to a full meeting the Commissioners. Once designation is made SCC staff will work with district(s) in the area affected to coordinate outreach and implementation.

It is critical that as many affected farmers and ranchers are aware of the funding opportunity as possible, and that they are made aware of any other relief programs for which they may be eligible.

Applications shall be submitted in a form and manner prescribed by SCC. SCC may contract with a conservation district or districts to assist in the collection and review of applications.

Unless otherwise agreed to by SCC, applications will be reviewed by an advisory committee specific to that disaster response. The advisory committee will typically be made up of one member each from the Washington State Department of Agriculture, a CD Supervisor or designee (in the case that more than one CD is involved, a Supervisor from each CD Board may be included), SCC, and an agricultural industry representative. Other committee makeup may be considered as best fits the situation.

The review committee is responsible to:

- Provide technical insight and awareness of local conditions.
- Ensure consistency with funding procedures and funding intent.
- Provide for case-by-case consideration of projects that are unique cases.
- Make funding recommendations to the SCC executive director or their designee.
- Develop area and disaster-specific criteria to evaluate which applicants are considered most economically vulnerable.
- Advise district staff and SCC on outreach strategies to inform potentially impacted producers of available assistance, including DAP, and to help to eliminate or remove barriers to participation, especially to economically vulnerable farmers and ranchers.

The review committee will meet as often as needed to review applications.

The conservation district will retain all applications, documents, receipts, and other materials related to the farmer or rancher's submittal to show proof of damage, loss, or expense incurred, subject to review by the review committee members and SCC (on request). It is recognized that from time to time, applications may need further review by the review committee or SCC leadership.

Upon approval of the application by SCC, the farmer or rancher will be formally notified of the award. If awards present a cash flow difficulty for the district, they are encouraged to request a funding advance.

5. Program Rules

- Payment can only be made on a reimbursement basis.
- The maximum grant reimbursement is normally 75% of the total eligible expenses incurred in the same fiscal year as the award. Depending on the funding source used by SCC in any given disaster response, expenses incurred in the prior fiscal year *may* be eligible. Contact the program lead for more information.

- Funds may be awarded for:
 - New projects addressing impacts caused by a natural disaster designated by SCC for DAP program eligibility or,
 - Reimbursement of expenses already incurred for a natural disaster designated by SCC for the DAP program and in compliance with these guidelines.

6. Eligible Grant Recipients

Farmers and ranchers are eligible to receive grants based on the following criteria.

To be eligible, a farmer or rancher must meet the following requirements:

- A. Meet the definition of farmer or rancher (above).
- B. Have sustained physical damage or incurred cost to their farm or ranching operation due to a natural disaster such as a flood, earthquake, or wildfire for which SCC designates these funds available.
- C. Provide sufficient documentation of such damage and/or incurred cost as a result of that natural disaster.

Additional requirements:

- D. Lost or reduced income is not itself an eligible expense, though it may help establish producer eligibility under the program.
- E. Application deadline will be established for each disaster approved by SCC for use of these funds.
- F. Funding may be awarded on a rolling basis and may be expended well before this date. Early applications are encouraged.
- G. Applications must be complete and have all required documentation to be considered. SCC reserves the right to request additional information or documentation to determine eligibility. Applications missing documentation or otherwise deemed incomplete will not be considered for funding until sufficient information has been received.
- H. Physical damage or incurred expenses covered, in whole or in part, by insurance or other governmental sources are not eligible.
- I. Farmers or ranchers must show that the physical damage or economic loss is to their farm or ranching operation. Damage to non-farm structures is not eligible.
- J. Grants can only be used to reimburse expenses incurred in whole or in part due to the disaster.
- K. If an entity/business/operation/ranch/farm is owned by more than one person, only one application may be submitted.
- L. If an entity/business/operation/ranch/farm which suffered damage or loss is leased, the owner must provide a letter giving permission for expenses to be reimbursed and a statement that the owner will not be claiming for same expenses.
- M. Grants are available to reimburse up to 75% of actual costs incurred.
- N. A farmer or rancher will be required to show all documentation of the entirety of the expenses paid to determine the SCC grant amount (Example: A farmer would need to submit documentation for \$2,000 of eligible expenses to receive \$1,500 in reimbursement).
- O. Except for approved DIP (District-Implemented Projects), all expenses must be paid by the farmer or rancher before reimbursement will be provided.
- P. Verification of the damage caused by the disaster is required prior to SCC disbursing funds. Please include any pictures, certifications, or other documentation of the damage or cost.
- Q. SCC reserves the right to deny applications if the farmer or rancher cannot provide required documentation within the deadline provided by SCC when requesting the information. All determinations regarding the eligibility of expenses and funding amounts are final.
- R. In order to make funding available to a greater number of applicants, awards are capped at a maximum of \$50,000 unless an exemption is granted. Exemption requests are considered on a case-by-case basis.

- S. Depending on the funding source used by SCC in any given disaster response, expenses incurred in the prior fiscal year *may* be eligible. Contact the program lead for more information.

7. Prioritization

Funding shall be prioritized for farmers and ranchers who are most economically vulnerable.

- One tool to consider is the [NRCS definition of Limited Resource Farmer and Rancher](#).
- Another possible threshold to consider is prioritization of those who meet the Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition of low- and moderate-income household (household income at or below 120% of Area Median Income).
- Others may be proposed as are appropriate for the area and the disaster. The review committee shall select/establish criteria appropriate for the location and nature of the disaster to determine which applicants are most economically vulnerable.

Particular attention will be paid to outreach efforts that reach economically vulnerable and historically underserved farmers and ranchers and to remove or reduce barriers to their participation in this and other disaster assistance programs.

8. Use of Grant Funds

Grant funds may be used for approved projects recovering from the disaster or to reimburse for expenses **incurred because of the disaster**. Potentially reimbursable expenses include payroll, rent, building improvements (improvements limited to restoring to pre-disaster condition, enhancements may be considered if they contribute to disaster resiliency) or repairs, replacing damaged or lost crops, livestock, and equipment, and other operations and business expenses of a farm or ranch.

SCC grant funds shall be administered according to SCC grants policies and procedures, including but not limited to as described in the most recent version of the Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual.

Depending on the funding source SCC uses for any particular response, some expense categories may not be eligible.

Reasonable staff time and authorized expenses expended by the conservation district or districts in administering the work of this program, including outreach to potentially impacted producers regarding this program and other available assistance, will also be an eligible use of these funds. Technical assistance budget must be preapproved.

July 20th, 2023 Business Meeting

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: B'Elanna Rhodehamel, Riparian Plant Propagation Program Manager

SUBJECT: Riparian Plant Propagation Programmatic Guidelines Update

Action Item

☒

Informational Item

☐

Summary:

Draft guidelines for the Riparian Plant Propagation Program (RPPP) were sent out for a 45-day review to conservation districts on June 16, 2023. This portion of the draft guidelines under review focuses on the cultivation part of the program, in which conservation districts can cultivate and propagate native riparian trees and shrubs at holding sites until ready to be planted in restoration projects. Our objective is to provide a framework for funding opportunities for conservation districts to purchase native riparian trees and shrubs for restoration, create or improve upon existing holding sites, or for maintenance of RPPP projects. The language in the guidelines is derived from the two Request for Proposals (RFP's) and award notifications from FY22. The revisions made to the guidelines are a direct response to comments, concerns, and need for clarification by districts. We hope to finalize this section of the guidelines before funding opportunities in FY23 to enable a seamless implementation of RPPP.

Requested Action (if action item):

Adoption of Riparian Plant Propagation Programmatic Guidelines.

Staff Contact:

B'Elanna Rhodehamel, RPPP Program Manager (brhodehamel@scc.wa.gov, 564-669-4638)

Background and Discussion:

In FY22, there were two RFP's available for conservation districts to support the Riparian Plant Propagation Program. In the first round of funding in September 2022, funds were awarded to 8 districts to purchase native riparian trees and shrubs for cold storage and/or cultivation at established holding sites. In the second round of funding in March 2022, funds were awarded to 9 districts to create/improve and/or expand holding sites for cultivation.

The draft guidelines are based on language used from these two rounds of funding, both from the RFP's and award notifications. The guidelines include information outlining eligible project types that conservation districts can undertake, ensuring clarity and alignment with program objectives. Furthermore, the guidelines specify the general requirements that districts must fulfill to qualify for funding. These requests encompass various aspects, such as SCC grant/contract policy, the application process, and the general timeline.

Edits to the guidelines from the 45-day review period incorporate valuable feedback and comments from conservation districts. This collaborative approach ensures that the guidelines accurately reflect the needs and concerns of the districts.

Recommended Action and Options (if action item):

Approval of Riparian Plant Propagation Programmatic Guidelines.

Next Steps:

- Updated programmatic guidelines will be posted on website and sent out to districts.
- Maintenance RFP will be made available for conservation districts.
- Collect riparian restoration project information from districts/restoration groups to organize plant needs.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 20, 2023 Business Meeting

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, SCC Interim Executive Director

FROM: Alison Halpern, Scientific Policy Advisor and Interim Acting Policy Director

SUBJECT: Shellfish Grant draft programmatic guidelines

Action Item

X

Informational Item

Summary:

The SCC Shellfish Grant programmatic guidelines have not been updated since 2018. Based on conversations with the 14 districts with shellfish growing areas, SCC staff, and partners from DOH and EPA, we saw opportunities to update the guidelines to improve the process for the districts while better coordinating with DOH to identify threatened shellfish growing areas.

Requested Action:

Approve this final draft of the updated Shellfish Programmatic Guidelines, to be effective 1Aug2023.

Staff Contact:

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

Background and Discussion:

Since 2013, funding has been provided to the State Conservation Commission (SCC) to provide grants that complete natural resource enhancement projects necessary to improve water quality in shellfish growing areas.

In 2011, NOAA created a National Shellfish Initiative to increase the number of bivalves produced in the U.S. That same year, several states — including Washington — created their own Shellfish Initiatives. The Washington Shellfish Initiative (WSI) had three initial goals: 1) Create a public/private partnership for shellfish aquaculture; 2) Promote native shellfish restoration and recreational shellfish harvest; and 3) Ensure clean water to protect and enhance shellfish beds. The SCC received \$5M in funding for the 2013-2015 biennium to use to “complete natural resource

enhancement projects necessary to improve water quality in shellfish growing areas”, leading to the creation of the Shellfish Grant program.

The programmatic guidelines were last updated in January 2018 and are due for review and improvement. In speaking with districts and SCC staff, we learned that there are improvements that could be made to better clarify the types of projects that are best suited for the Shellfish program and improve the project submission and internal review process. Conversations with staff from DOH's Shellfish Program indicated ways that the SCC could better coordinate with DOH to communicate priority shellfish growing areas (SGA) back to the districts and help focus some projects to target water quality issues affecting those areas.

Proposed improvements to the draft programmatic guidelines include:

Better clarification – The guidelines could provide more details in how projects will be prioritized for funding. Based on the intent and proviso language of the Shellfish grant program, projects should:

- Address water quality issues — especially those caused by agricultural non-point fecal pollution
- Occur in watersheds draining into shellfish growing areas (SGAs)

We propose further prioritization criteria to aid in the internal selection of projects by encouraging that Shellfish projects that are:

- Geographically close to an SGA or adjacent to a river or stream that drains into an SGA, especially those that are currently open to help keep them open as well as SGAs on the DOH Threatened list to help prevent their closure.
- Part of a Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) Program, Pollution Control Action Team (PCAT), Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP), or other collaborative referral from the Washington State Department of Agriculture, Department of Ecology, county program, etc.

Projects addressing water quality issues in SGAs that are threatened with classification downgrades in [DOH's annual report](#) may be ranked higher.

Streamlined process - We also propose streamlining the Shellfish project submission process in CPDS. Currently, districts submitting projects for shellfish funding must answer the following two questions:

- Describe the shellfish benefit as it relates to the resource impact, whether a shellfish growing area or ocean acidification project. (For example: “Project will implement practices to reduce input of pathogens and nutrients into waters flowing to an identified shellfish growing area”.)
- Describe the extent to which the project is part of a Pollution Control Action Team (PCAT), a Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) Program, Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP), or other collaborative program addressing local natural resource concerns.
- If not addressing an impact to a shellfish growing area, does the project address a resource concern impacting ocean acidification issues? A resource concern impacting ocean acidification could include one or more of the following:

- Urban storm water
- Septic tanks
- Rural runoff from agricultural or other lands

Rather than filling out those text boxes, we propose using yes/no checkboxes to simplify the process and/or having only one text box to avoid redundancy. We believe that better describing the Shellfish program's priorities will make it easier for districts to describe their projects in the standard Property Description and Resource Concern Description rather than needing additional text boxes.

Improved Communication – The proposed guidelines include language about better communication from the internal SCC review group so that districts know when projects submitted for shellfish funding are not selected for funding because they do not rank as high as others or do not meet the criteria of the Shellfish program and might be more successful through other grant programs.

The final draft updated programmatic guidelines can be viewed here:

<https://sccwagov.box.com/s/ud2l4lqbtbflrqnfq9ud1ny8zpgt1id>

District outreach and review: The fourteen districts with Shellfish Growing Areas have had 45 days to review and provide feedback to the draft guidelines. SCC staff updated the Puget Sound CD Caucus at its monthly meeting on 5June2023 also held a listening session via Zoom on 8June2023, which was attended by several districts and was also recorded. District staff appreciated the updated guidelines and offered suggestions as well as sharing a few challenges. SCC staff have incorporated that feedback into the final draft.

Recommended Action and Options

SCC staff requests that the Commissioners review and approve the updated draft programmatic guidelines for the Shellfish Grant Program.

Next Steps:

- SCC staff will work on the necessary updates to CPDS to align with the updated programmatic guidelines.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 20, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, SCC Interim Executive Director

FROM: Alison Halpern, Acting Policy Director
Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: Salmon Recovery Funding (SRF) draft revised guidelines

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

Conservation Commission (Commission) staff propose revised Salmon Recovery Funding (SRF) guidelines for consideration and potential action. Shana Joy and Alison Halpern are co-leading moving both SRF and the new riparian grants funds forward. Revising the SRF guidelines to enable conservation districts to continue implementing projects while the new riparian grant program is built is a first step.

Requested Action:

That the Commission adopt the revised SRF guidelines as presented for immediate implementation.

Background

In fiscal year 2023, we received a \$10 million supplemental operating funds appropriation from the Legislature for riparian restoration. As of June 20, 2023, we have awarded \$7,594,413 of those funds. The actual expenditures are \$3,422,199. As we receive and process two more months of grant expenditures from districts it is likely that most of what was awarded will be spent but we know there will be unspent funds when we close out the fiscal year and biennium.

The Legislature approved re-appropriating any unspent funds to SCC and moved the remaining funding from the operating budget into the capital budget. This means we can spend the remaining funding in fiscal years 24-25. However, we must now abide by capital funds restrictions, e.g., education and outreach projects are no longer eligible.

Commission staff have made revisions to the SRF program guidelines to limit the eligible project types to ONLY cost share and district implemented projects with a maximum of 25% allowance for technical

assistance attached to those projects in order to abide by capital funding restrictions. A track-changes version is attached to show what portions of the guidelines are proposed to be removed and a clean copy is attached as well. To expedite funding allocations and conservation districts' ability to do work on the ground this summer and fall, Commission staff are asking Commissioners to approve the revised guidelines as presented for immediate implementation.

Additional Information and Next Steps

Two new appropriations are coming to the SCC this biennium. This new funding has a couple of components to be aware of. The two separate appropriations are as follows:

Salmon Riparian Restoration Program Outreach - \$3,000,000

This is operating funding. The budget proviso language states, "One-time funding is provided solely to support the outreach, identification, and implementation of salmon riparian habitat restoration projects that are appropriated through the capital budget."

Riparian Grant Program - \$25,000,000

This is capital funding. The budget proviso language states:

"(1) The appropriations in this section are provided solely for the state conservation commission to provide grants for riparian restoration projects with landowners.

(2)(a) Within funds appropriated in this section, the commission shall develop and implement the voluntary riparian grant program to fund protection and restoration of critical riparian management zones. The commission is responsible for developing the voluntary grant program criteria to achieve optimal restoration of functioning riparian ecosystems in priority critical riparian management zones.

(b) In adopting the program criteria under this section, the commission must:

- (i) Invite federally recognized tribes to be full participants;
- (ii) Coordinate with private landowners and other interested stakeholders;
- (iii) Coordinate with the department of ecology, the department of fish and wildlife, conservation districts, and the department of agriculture; and
- (iv) Consider the best available, locally applicable science that is specific to each region of the state where the program criteria will be applied.

(3)(a) The commission shall prioritize critical riparian management zones at the watershed or subbasin scale where grant funding under the program created in this section would be primarily targeted. The prioritization must be informed by, consistent with, and aligned with one or more of the following: Watershed plans developed pursuant to chapter 90.82 RCW; the action agenda developed under RCW 90.71.260; regional recovery plans created under RCW 25 77.85.090; the habitat project lists developed pursuant to 26 RCW 77.85.050; the prioritization process

developed under RCW 27 77.95.160; and priority projects identified for salmon recovery through agency grant programs.

(b) The prioritization of critical riparian management projects must be developed in coordination with:

- (i) Local federally recognized tribes;
- (ii) Local private landowners who are voluntarily participating in the program;
- (iii) Local conservation districts; and
- (iv) The local county, the department of fish and wildlife, the department of ecology, and water resource inventory area planning units organized pursuant to chapter 90.82 RCW.

(4)(a) Conditions for awarding funding for projects under this program include, but are not limited to:

- (i) Consistency with the program criteria established under subsection (2) of this section;
- (ii) Tiered incentive rates tied to improving functionality for riparian areas; and
- (iii) Other requirements as determined by the commission.

(b) The commission must give preference and compensation for permanent protection of riparian areas or removal of riparian land from agricultural production or other development by purchase at fair market value.

(5) The commission must distribute riparian grant program funding equitably throughout the state, consistent with received grant applications and benefit to salmon habitat. Funding is intended primarily for projects located in salmon recovery regions, as defined in RCW 77.85.010, but funding may also be distributed to a project not located in a salmon recovery region upon a determination by the commission that the project will provide a unique benefit to salmon habitat.

(6) Allowable expenses to a grantee receiving funds under this section include, but are not limited to, labor, equipment, fencing, mulch, seed, seedling trees, manual weed control, and yearly maintenance costs for up to 10 years.

(7) Any native woody trees and shrubs planted with funding provided under this section must be maintained for a minimum of five years or as otherwise set by the commission for each grantee. Vegetation must be chosen to prevent invasive weed populations and ensure survival and successful establishment of plantings.

(8) The commission shall determine appropriate recordkeeping and data collections procedures required for program implementation and shall establish a data management system that allows for coordination between the commission and other state agencies. Any data collected or shared under this section may be used only to assess the successes of the riparian grant program in improving the functions of critical riparian habitat.

(9) The commission shall develop and implement a framework that includes monitoring, adaptive management, and metrics in order to ensure consistency with the requirements of the riparian grant program. The monitoring and adaptive management framework may include, but is not limited to, consideration of:

- (a) Acres identified as eligible for restoration within a watershed;
- (b) Acres planned to be restored;
- (c) Acres actually planted and maintained;
- (d) Success in targeting and achieving aggregated project implementation resulting in increase in linear miles restored;
- (e) Plan review criteria; and
- (f) Other similar factors as identified by the commission.

(10) The commission may use up to two percent of any amounts appropriated in this section for targeted outreach activities that focus on critically identified geographic locations for listed salmon species.

(11) The commission may use up to four percent of amounts appropriated in this section for administrative expenses.

(12) For the purposes of this section, "critical riparian management zone" means the area adjacent to freshwaters, wetlands, and marine waters that has been locally or regionally identified as an area where salmon recovery efforts would significantly benefit from enhanced protection or restoration.

Commission staff are forming a work group of the designated agencies (noted in the proviso language) and district volunteers as soon as possible. An announcement was shared out to conservation districts on June 28th soliciting volunteers to join the work group. Commission staff are also working with the designated agencies on delegates to the work group. Ideally, SCC would like to present new draft programmatic guidelines to commissioners at the Sept. 21 commission meeting, followed by a review and comment period, with final guidelines presented for possible adoption at the Nov. 30 commission meeting.

SCC will share updates about draft guidelines for new riparian grants with tribes, state agencies, agricultural and environmental representatives, business, local government, and others during the State Riparian Roundtable meetings."

Staff Contact:

Alison Halpern, ahalpern@scc.wa.gov, 360-280-5556

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



Salmon Recovery Funding Programmatic Guidelines

Revised for FY24-25

1.0 Program Background

A portion of funds in the State Operating budget are appropriated to the Salmon Recovery Account. From this Salmon Recovery Funding (SRF), \$10 million has been allocated to the State Conservation Commission (SCC) in the FY23 supplemental budget with proviso language that specifies how these funds are to be used. This proviso states the funding is provided:

“...solely for the commission to provide grants for riparian restoration projects with landowners.”

The Commission interprets the SRF funding to be restricted to projects with landowners for the purpose of riparian restoration.

In fiscal year 2024, the remaining funds from the original \$10 million appropriation were moved to the capital budget and re-appropriated to the SCC so we can continue to administer a revised SRF grant program. Only those activities that are allowable with capital funding will be eligible going forward.

Because the SRF funds come from the Operating budget, all projects must begin July 1, 2022 and be completed by June 30, 2023. At the end of the fiscal year unspent operating funds will revert to the Salmon Recovery Account. Due to the short timeline for expenditure and the criticality of achieving and demonstrating effective restoration projects with landowners through voluntary incentives, it is essential quality projects are implemented and completed by June 30, 2023.

2.0 Eligibility

2.1 Who is eligible?

All Washington conservation districts are eligible for funding from the Salmon Recovery Fund. A conservation district may partner with other entities on a proposal.

2.2 Project Evaluation Criteria

All projects must be located within riparian areas. Instream projects must be conducted in support of a riparian restoration project. See definitions section for definitions of the terms “riparian” and “instream” projects.

Projects must be started within 120 days of the award of funding and completed by June 30, 2025. This work may include technical assistance (outreach/engagement, project planning and design, etc.). Funding will not be extended beyond this date, ~~and there is no guarantee continued legislative appropriation for this program.~~

Districts are encouraged to geographically group landowners and practices together. This targeted approach of clustering practices with multiple landowners in one concentrated area allows for more effective and efficient use of funding and helps reach the measurable natural resource improvement goal more quickly.

Projects meeting one or more of the following criteria may receive enhanced prioritization:

- 2.2.1 Located within a watershed or portions of a watershed with critical salmon habitat needs as identified by the Commission as having insufficient quality of salmon riparian habitat. This information is available to conservation districts through the Commission.
- 2.2.2 In addition to increasing riparian habitat for salmon, districts are encouraged to prioritize projects implemented in areas with identified pollution inputs with particular focus on areas with 303(d) listing for temperature, projects implementing an Ecology TMDL implementation plan, and project implementing a local resource plan. Information on how to access this information will be posted on the Commission’s website.
- 2.2.3 A project adjacent to or within the same sub-basin as another project funded either with SRF funding or with other fund sources such as CREP, SRFB, or other funding.
- 2.2.4 Projects that group work on multiple parcels/landowners together into a larger continuous project.

- 2.2.5 Preference for projects that are included in a salmon recovery plan, WRIA plan or other local salmon habitat restoration strategy.
- 2.2.6 Projects where partners, contracted field technicians, or coordination between districts supports or leverages capacity of existing CD staff to avoid new hires. This is ~~potentially one-time funding at this point with no guarantee of carry forward into the next biennium.~~
- 2.2.7 Districts are encouraged to prioritize projects connected to the conservation district's annual or long-range plan.

2.3 Project Proposal Requirements

2.3.1 Eligible Activities

All project proposals must include eligible activities. Eligible activities are those intended to increase protection and/or restoration of riparian habitat. Instream activities with no connection to nearshore or upland riparian habitat function will not be funded. See Appendix A for list of eligible best management practices (BMPs).

2.4 Eligible Project Types

SRF funds may be used to support four different project types: 1.) landowner implemented cost-share; 2.) District Implemented Project (DIP); or 3.) incentives program (e.g. commodity buffer); ~~or 4.) planning/design of a riparian restoration BMP.~~ 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:

2.4.1 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 "Salmon Recovery Funding" funding.
- The cost-share contract must be generated from CPDS and utilized for this type of project. The cost-share agreement terms 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.

2.4.2 District Implemented Projects

- 2.4.2.1 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 – i.e., 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.
- 2.4.2.2 A district implemented project must not include cost-sharing, cash reimbursement, to a landowner(s) with SRF or other SCC funds. The District is assuming all responsibility for project planning and construction directly.
- 2.4.2.3 All project information and completed practices must be entered completely into the Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS).
- 2.4.2.4 A Landowner Agreement is required for any projects completed on non-district owned property and a fully signed 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.
- 2.4.2.5 There is no match or cost-share scenario requirement for these projects. However, other sources of contributing funds toward the project should be reported.
- 2.4.2.6 See District Implemented Project Decision Tree for assistance with determining if a cost-share or DIP approach is best for your project or contact your Regional Manager.

~~2.4.3 District Landowner Outreach Projects~~

~~Other eligible activities include programs for landowner outreach and engagement targeting specific sub-basin or defined geographic sub-watershed areas with particular resource concerns impacting the recovery of listed salmonid species. Examples of specific resource concerns include water~~

~~temperature or riparian area degradation but there may be others. Since funding is limited to the state fiscal year, such program proposals must be completed within this timeframe with the outcome of identifying future riparian habitat restoration projects clustered or grouped in the targeted location.~~

3.0 Program Rules and Funding Process

3.1 -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 Salmon Recovery Funding (SRF) funds.

3.2 -Timeline & Application for Funding

SRF funds are allocated to conservation districts at the beginning of fiscal year ~~2024~~, which starts July 1, 2023. Funds may also be offered throughout the state fiscal year as they are available. Funds will be allocated to districts based on complete applications submitted utilizing the [Salmon Recovery Funding Request](#). Funding will be allocated based on a competitive granting process. Applications will be reviewed by an internal team of SCC staff for complete information, adherence to program guidelines, and scored for the extent to which the request meets the program goals. [Applications will be reviewed every two weeks as long as funding is available.](#)

Districts are strongly encouraged to enter projects into CPDS to build future requests for funding.

Regional Managers will interact with each conservation district with awarded SRF funding to ascertain project progress. Work must be initiated, regardless of project type, within 120 days of funding award to the district. This work may include technical assistance. ~~(outreach/engagement, project planning and design, etc.)~~ At the end of 120 days if progress has not been demonstrated, the district may forfeit the funding allocation.

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 through a competitive process.

3.3 Funding Process

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

- To ensure consistency with funding criteria and funding intent

- To request clarity or additional information on the nature of specific projects
- To provide for case-by-case consideration of projects that are unique cases
- To provide formal award of funds for projects

~~Applications will be reviewed every two weeks as long as funding is available. The review committee will meet as often as necessary to review projects. During the period July 2022 – September 2022, the review committee will meet weekly to review project applications. Subsequent to this period, the review committee will meet as needed to review project applications.~~ It is recognized that from time to time, projects may need further review by the review committee or SCC leadership.

Upon approval of the project by the committee, districts will be formally notified of the award by SCC finance staff.

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

3.4 Landowner Cost-share Cap

All landowner cost-share proposals must be consistent with the SCC grants manual and policies. Current SCC policies cap cost-share to \$100,000 per landowner per fiscal year. A project proposed for SRF funding may request cost-share in excess of the \$100,000 cap. Such requests must be made as part of the project proposal submitted to the review committee and must include a detailed justification for exceeding the cap. Approval of requests to exceed the cap will be considered on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the SCC Executive Director or designee based on the recommendation of the review committee.

3.5 Technical Assistance

A maximum of 25% of the total funding award of SRF funds may be used for technical assistance activities for cost-share, district implemented projects, or incentive programs. TA activities may include 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. ~~Planning/design only projects are not eligible for a technical assistance allowance.~~

3.6 General Requirements

- 3.6.1 All funded cost-share and completed District Implemented Projects and practices must be entered in the CPDS.

- 3.6.2 All projects and practices must have a detailed description. See example descriptions below.
- 3.6.2 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.
- 3.6.3 An overhead percentage only is allowed to be billed based on actual hours worked.
- 3.6.4 Ineligible costs include administrative goods and services (office rent, copy machines, telephones etc....)
- 3.6.5 Work must be underway on all awarded SRF projects within 120 days of the funding allocation. This could be technical assistance effort or actual construction.
- 3.6.6 Any district that does not utilize their awarded SRF funding in a timely manner or returns funding late in the biennium without a compelling explanation, may be deemed ineligible to receive future SRF funding.
- 3.6.7 All project and practices must be completed in the funding time frame. The funding is granted on a ~~fiscal-year~~[biennial](#) basis (July 1, 2023 - June 30, [2025](#)) therefore, all projects must be completed by the end of [the biennium](#). All technical assistance costs must be vouchered for in the month following when the expenditures are incurred.
- 3.6.8 A [Returned Funds form](#) must be submitted as soon as it becomes clear that funds will not be utilized.

3.7 CPDS Requirements

- 3.7.1 All funded cost-share and completed DIP's and practices must be entered into the CPDS.
- Input the amount of SRF funding utilized for the practice.
 - Input other funding sources also being utilized for the practice such as landowner contribution or another grant.
- 3.7.2 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.
- 3.7.3 "Before" and "After" pictures are required for each practice.
- 3.7.4 "Planned" and "Actual" implementation measures are required for each

practice.

3.8 Vouchering

Monthly grant vouchers are required. Technical assistance must be vouchered for [monthly](#) whether or not any cost-share practices or a district implemented project were completed in the given month. [District implemented projects costs may also be vouchered for monthly.](#)

- Once practices are completed, the following fields must 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 [Cultural Resources 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 rules.

3.9 Cultural Resources

4.1.1 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.

4.1.2 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 into a separate grant outcome as each award occurs.

4.0 Definitions

4.1 Definitions

4.1.1 **Instream habitat improvement¹:** Projects which include the placement of natural structures such as large wood (LW; single or multiple logs), engineered log jams, and artificial structures (e.g., weirs, deflectors, boulders) into the active stream channel, or similar structures. Instream restoration activities as stand-alone restoration

¹ Krall, M., C. Clark, P. Roni, K. Ross. 2019. Lessons Learned from Long-Term Effectiveness Monitoring of Instream Habitat Projects. North American Journal of Fisheries Management 39:1395-1411, 2019

techniques are only appropriate if the cause of stream degradation can be isolated to a specific instream cause.²

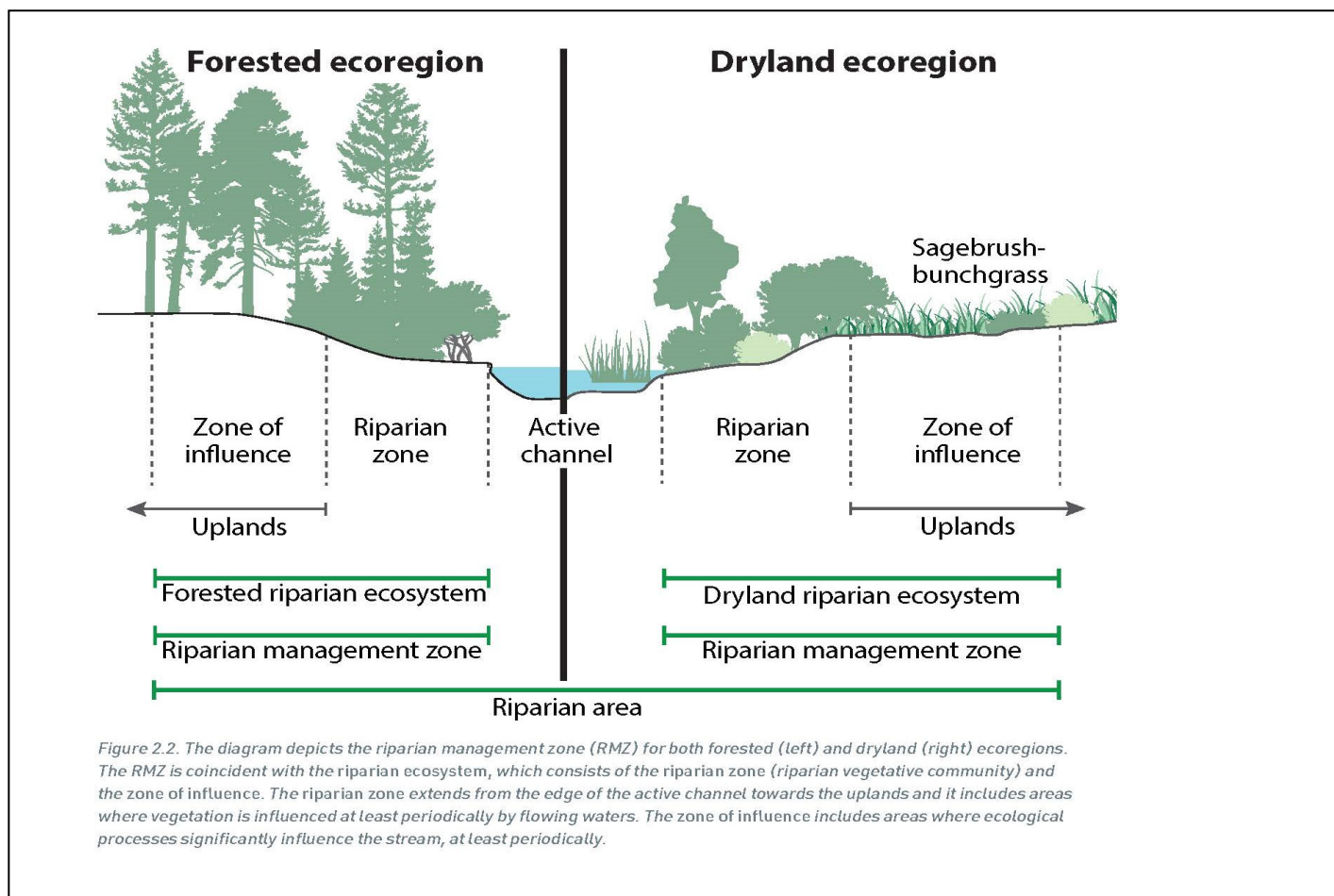
4.1.2 **Practice:** Approved practice per current NRCS practices available within CPDS, or Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) approved practices or Licensed Engineer approved practices.

4.1.3 **Riparian ecosystem**³: Riparian ecosystems are transitional between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and are distinguished by gradients in biophysical conditions, ecological processes, and biota. They are areas through which surface and subsurface hydrology connect waterbodies with their adjacent uplands. They include those portions of terrestrial ecosystems that significantly influence exchanges of energy and matter with aquatic ecosystems (i.e., a zone of influence). Our definition of riparian ecosystem does not include adjacent waters (i.e., river or streams, but does include riverine wetlands) and recognizes the riparian zone as a distinctive area within riparian ecosystems.

Allowable riparian area projects are those in the area described above and pictured below and are intended to address ecosystem attributes particularly important to salmonid needs.

² Cramer, Michelle L. (managing editor). 2012. Stream Habitat Restoration Guidelines. Co-published by the Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, Transportation and Ecology, Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, Puget Sound Partnership, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Olympia, Washington.

³ Quinn, T., G.F. Wilhere, and K.L. Krueger, technical editors. 2020. Riparian Ecosystems, Volume 1: Science Synthesis and Management Implications. Habitat Program, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Olympia. p.292



4.1.4 Riparian Restoration: Riparian restoration activities are management practices which focus on reinstating the ecological processes that naturally create and maintain stream habitat over the long term and return the stream to a dynamic, self-sustaining condition. Restoration strategies may include site- or reach-scale projects intended to increase or improve habitat or the processes that create and maintain habitat. Restoration actions also commonly include enhancement - habitat creation or stabilization - where the full restoration of processes is not possible within acceptable timeframes.

4.1.5 Riparian zone⁴: A distinctive area within riparian ecosystems. The riparian zone contains wet or moist soils and plants adapted to growing conditions associated with periodically saturated soils.

⁴ Quinn, et al., at 293

APPENDIX A

ELIGIBLE BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR SALMON RECOVERY FUNDING

NOTE: All instream BMPs must be done in conjunction with an upland restoration activity.

<u>BMP Name</u>	<u>Practice Code</u>	
Riparian Forest Buffer		391
Wetland Creation		658
Wetland Enhancement		659
Wetland Restoration		657
Bulkhead Removal	SCC16	
Conservation Cover		327
Hedgerow Planting		422
Riparian Herbaceous Cover		390
Structures for Wildlife		649
Access Control		472
Tree/Shrub Establishment		612
Beaver Dam Analogue	SCC3	
Aquatic Organism Passage		396
Brush Management		314
Contour Buffer Strips		332
Critical Area Planting		342
Filter Strip		393
Grade Stabilization Structure		410
Herbaceous Weed Control		315
LWD Structure	SCC26	
Root Wads	SCC45	
Dynamic Revetments	SCC46	
Bank Reshaping/Channel Modification	SCC48	
GPS Precision Guidance System	SCC52	
Bank Barb	SCC53	
Live Stake Revetments	SCC54	
Dead Stake Revetments	SCC55	
Rock Toe Protection	SCC56	
Brush Mattress	SCC57	
Mulching		484
Multi-Story Cropping		379
Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment		654

Salmon Recovery Funding Programmatic Guidelines

Revised for FY24-25

1.0 Program Background

A portion of funds in the State Operating budget are appropriated to the Salmon Recovery Account. From this Salmon Recovery Funding (SRF), \$10 million has been allocated to the State Conservation Commission (SCC) in the FY23 supplemental budget with proviso language that specifies how these funds are to be used. This proviso states the funding is provided:

“...solely for the commission to provide grants for riparian restoration projects with landowners.”

The Commission interprets the SRF funding to be restricted to projects with landowners for the purpose of riparian restoration.

In fiscal year 2024, the remaining funds from the original \$10 million appropriation were moved to the capital budget and re-appropriated to the SCC so we can continue to administer a revised SRF grant program. Only those activities that are allowable with capital funding will be eligible going forward.

2.0 Eligibility

2.1 Who is eligible?

All Washington conservation districts are eligible for funding from the Salmon Recovery Fund. A conservation district may partner with other entities on a proposal.

2.2 Project Evaluation Criteria

All projects must be located within riparian areas. Instream projects must be conducted in support of a riparian restoration project. See definitions section for definitions of the terms “riparian” and “instream” projects.

Projects must be started within 120 days of the award of funding and completed by June 30, 2025. This work may include technical assistance (, project planning and design, etc.). Funding will not be extended beyond this date.

Districts are encouraged to geographically group landowners and practices together. This targeted approach of clustering practices with multiple landowners in one concentrated area allows for more effective and efficient use of funding and helps reach the measurable natural resource improvement goal more quickly.

Projects meeting one or more of the following criteria may receive enhanced prioritization:

- 2.2.1 Located within a watershed or portions of a watershed with critical salmon habitat needs as identified by the Commission as having insufficient quality of salmon riparian habitat. This information is available to conservation districts through the Commission.
- 2.2.2 In addition to increasing riparian habitat for salmon, districts are encouraged to prioritize projects implemented in areas with identified pollution inputs with particular focus on areas with 303(d) listing for temperature, projects implementing an Ecology TMDL implementation plan, and project implementing a local resource plan. Information on how to access this information will be posted on the Commission’s website.
- 2.2.3 A project adjacent to or within the same sub-basin as another project funded either with SRF funding or with other fund sources such as CREP, SRFB, or other funding.
- 2.2.4 Projects that group work on multiple parcels/landowners together into a larger continuous project.
- 2.2.5 Preference for projects that are included in a salmon recovery plan, WRIA plan or other local salmon habitat restoration strategy.
- 2.2.6 Projects where partners, contracted field technicians, or coordination between districts supports or leverages capacity of existing CD staff to avoid new hires. This is one-time funding.
- 2.2.7 Districts are encouraged to prioritize projects connected to the conservation district’s annual or long-range plan.

2.3 Project Proposal Requirements

2.3.1 Eligible Activities

All project proposals must include eligible activities. Eligible activities are those intended to increase protection and/or restoration of riparian habitat. Instream activities with no connection to nearshore or upland riparian habitat function will not be funded. See Appendix A for list of eligible best management practices (BMPs).

2.4 Eligible Project Types

SRF funds may be used to support four different project types: 1.) landowner implemented cost-share; 2.) District Implemented Project (DIP); or 3.) incentives program (e.g. commodity buffer). 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:

2.4.1 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 “Salmon Recovery Funding” funding.
- The cost-share contract must be generated from CPDS and utilized for this type of project. The cost-share agreement terms 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.

2.4.2 District Implemented Projects

2.4.2.1 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 – i.e., 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.

- 2.4.2.2 A district implemented project must not include cost-sharing, cash reimbursement, to a landowner(s) with SRF or other SCC funds. The District is assuming all responsibility for project planning and construction directly.
- 2.4.2.3 All project information and completed practices must be entered completely into the Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS).
- 2.4.2.4 A Landowner Agreement is required for any projects completed on non-district owned property and a fully signed 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.
- 2.4.2.5 There is no match or cost-share scenario requirement for these projects. However, other sources of contributing funds toward the project should be reported.
- 2.4.2.6 See District Implemented Project Decision Tree for assistance with determining if a cost-share or DIP approach is best for your project or contact your Regional Manager.

3.0 Program Rules and Funding Process

3.1 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 Salmon Recovery Funding (SRF) funds.

3.2 Timeline & Application for Funding

SRF funds are allocated to conservation districts at the beginning of fiscal year 2024, which starts July 1, 2023. Funds may also be offered throughout the state fiscal year as they are available. Funds will be allocated to districts based on complete applications submitted utilizing the Salmon Recovery Funding Request. Funding will be allocated based on a competitive granting process. Applications will be reviewed by an internal team of SCC staff for complete information, adherence to program guidelines, and scored for the extent to which the request meets the program goals. Applications will be reviewed every two weeks as long as funding is available.

Districts are strongly encouraged to enter projects into CPDS to build future requests for funding.

Regional Managers will interact with each conservation district with awarded SRF funding to ascertain project progress. Work must be initiated, regardless of project type, within 120 days of funding award to the district. This work may include technical assistance. At the end of 120 days if progress has not been demonstrated, the district may forfeit the funding allocation.

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 through a competitive process.

3.3 Funding Process

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

- To ensure consistency with funding criteria and funding intent
- To request clarity or additional information on the nature of specific projects
- To provide for case-by-case consideration of projects that are unique cases
- To provide formal award of funds for projects

Applications will be reviewed every two weeks as long as funding is available. It is recognized that from time to time, projects may need further review by the review committee or SCC leadership.

Upon approval of the project by the committee, districts will be formally notified of the award by SCC finance staff.

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

3.4 Landowner Cost-share Cap

All landowner cost-share proposals must be consistent with the SCC grants manual and policies. Current SCC policies cap cost-share to \$100,000 per landowner per fiscal year. A project proposed for SRF funding may request cost-share in excess of the \$100,000 cap. Such requests must be made as part of the project proposal submitted to the review committee and must include a detailed justification for exceeding the cap. Approval of requests to exceed the cap will be considered on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the SCC Executive Director or designee based on the recommendation of the review committee.

3.5 Technical Assistance

A maximum of 25% of the total funding award of SRF funds may be used for technical assistance activities for cost-share, district implemented projects, or incentive programs. TA activities may include 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.

3.6 General Requirements

- 3.6.1 All funded cost-share and completed District Implemented Projects and practices must be entered in the CPDS.
- 3.6.2 All projects and practices must have a detailed description. See example descriptions below.
- 3.6.2 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.
- 3.6.3 An overhead percentage only is allowed to be billed based on actual hours worked.
- 3.6.4 Ineligible costs include administrative goods and services (office rent, copy machines, telephones etc....)
- 3.6.5 Work must be underway on all awarded SRF projects within 120 days of the funding allocation. This could be technical assistance effort or actual construction.
- 3.6.6 Any district that does not utilize their awarded SRF funding in a timely manner or returns funding late in the biennium without a compelling explanation, may be deemed ineligible to receive future SRF funding.
- 3.6.7 All project and practices must be completed in the funding time frame. The funding is granted on a biennial basis (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2025) therefore, all projects must be completed by the end of the biennium. All technical assistance costs must be vouchered for in the month following when the expenditures are incurred.
- 3.6.8 A [Returned Funds form](#) must be submitted as soon as it becomes clear that funds will not be utilized.

3.7 CPDS Requirements

- 3.7.1 All funded cost-share and completed DIP's and practices must be entered into the CPDS.
 - i. Input the amount of SRF funding utilized for the practice.
 - ii. Input other funding sources also being utilized for the practice such as landowner contribution or another grant.
- 3.7.2 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.
- 3.7.3 "Before" and "After" pictures are required for each practice.
- 3.7.4 "Planned" and "Actual" implementation measures are required for each practice.

3.8 Vouchering

Monthly grant vouchers are required. Technical assistance must be vouchered for monthly whether or not any cost-share practices or a district implemented project were completed in the given month. District implemented projects costs may also be vouchered for monthly.

- Once practices are completed, the following fields must be updated in the CPDS prior to reimbursement:
 - "After" pictures are required for each practice.
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 - Completion date of practice is required.
- The [Cultural Resources 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 rules.

3.9 Cultural Resources

- 4.1.1 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.

- 4.1.2 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 into a separate grant outcome as each award occurs.

4.0 Definitions

4.1 Definitions

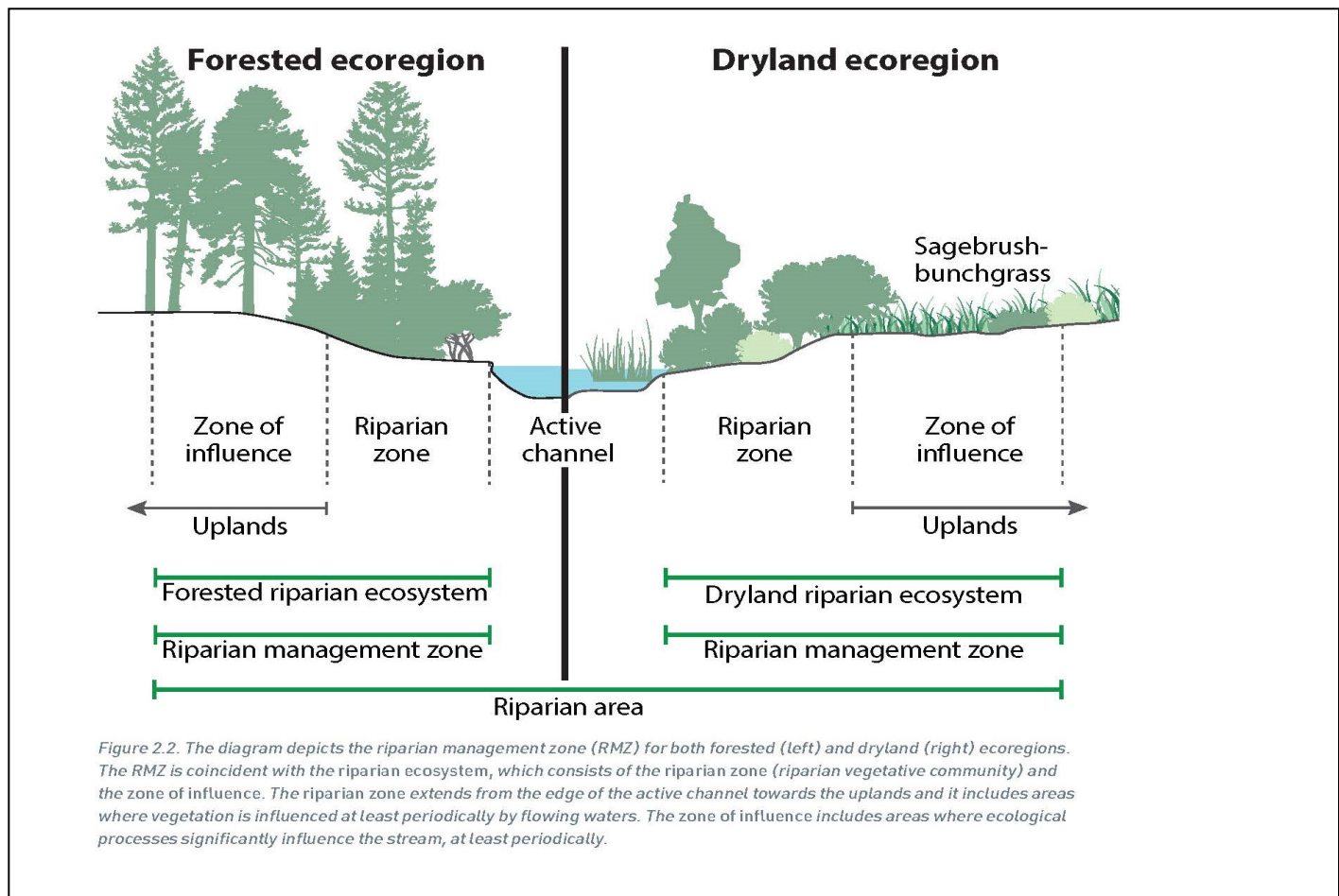
- 4.1.1 **Instream habitat improvement**¹: Projects which include the placement of natural structures such as large wood (LW; single or multiple logs), engineered log jams, and artificial structures (e.g., weirs, deflectors, boulders) into the active stream channel, or similar structures. Instream restoration activities as stand-alone restoration techniques are only appropriate if the cause of stream degradation can be isolated to a specific instream cause.²
- 4.1.2 **Practice**: Approved practice per current NRCS practices available within CPDS, or Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) approved practices or Licensed Engineer approved practices.
- 4.1.3 **Riparian ecosystem**³: Riparian ecosystems are transitional between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and are distinguished by gradients in biophysical conditions, ecological processes, and biota. They are areas through which surface and subsurface hydrology connect waterbodies with their adjacent uplands. They include those portions of terrestrial ecosystems that significantly influence exchanges of energy and matter with aquatic ecosystems (i.e., a zone of influence). Our definition of riparian ecosystem does not include adjacent waters (i.e., river or streams, but does include riverine wetlands) and recognizes the riparian zone as a distinctive area within riparian ecosystems.

Allowable riparian area projects are those in the area described above and pictured below and are intended to address ecosystem attributes particularly important to salmonid needs.

¹ Krall, M., C. Clark, P. Roni, K. Ross. 2019. Lessons Learned from Long-Term Effectiveness Monitoring of Instream Habitat Projects. North American Journal of Fisheries Management 39:1395-1411, 2019

² Cramer, Michelle L. (managing editor). 2012. Stream Habitat Restoration Guidelines. Co-published by the Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Natural Resources, Transportation and Ecology, Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, Puget Sound Partnership, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Olympia, Washington.

³ Quinn, T., G.F. Wilhere, and K.L. Krueger, technical editors. 2020. Riparian Ecosystems, Volume 1: Science Synthesis and Management Implications. Habitat Program, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Olympia. p.292



4.1.4 Riparian Restoration: Riparian restoration activities are management practices which focus on reinstating the ecological processes that naturally create and maintain stream habitat over the long term and return the stream to a dynamic, self-sustaining condition. Restoration strategies may include site- or reach-scale projects intended to increase or improve habitat or the processes that create and maintain habitat. Restoration actions also commonly include enhancement - habitat creation or stabilization - where the full restoration of processes is not possible within acceptable timeframes.

4.1.5 Riparian zone⁴: A distinctive area within riparian ecosystems. The riparian zone contains wet or moist soils and plants adapted to growing conditions associated with periodically saturated soils.

⁴ Quinn, et al., at 293

APPENDIX A

ELIGIBLE BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR SALMON RECOVERY FUNDING

NOTE: All instream BMPs must be done in conjunction with an upland restoration activity.

<u>BMP Name</u>	<u>Practice Code</u>	
Riparian Forest Buffer		391
Wetland Creation		658
Wetland Enhancement		659
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Washington State Conservation Commission

July 20, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, SCC Interim Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting and Budget

SUBJECT: 2024 Supplemental Budget Topics and not to exceed amounts

Action Item

X

Informational Item

Summary:

With the release of our 2023-2025 Operating & Capital Budget, we have identified topics which funding received did not meet the level of funding needed. The topics are listed below.

Commission staff, working with WACD, conservation districts, and agency partners, will continue to develop these concepts (as approved by the Commission) into the required format with additional detail.

We will also be working with OFM in the coming months to identify any funds that may need to shift from operating to capital to ensure we are able to fully utilize the funds within the timelines required.

Operating

Conservation Technical Assistance Not to exceed \$10,000,000 The original decision package requested additional resources for conservation districts to implement incentive-based programs in a targeted approach.

SCC FTE Needs Not to exceed \$600,000

SCC has reviewed the 2023-2023 budgets; we have identified a few areas where we received funding for new grant programs that did not include FTE's or did not include the number of FTE's to properly manage the programs. At this time SCC has identified an estimated 6 positions we would like to request funding and FTE's for.

Capital

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) State Matching Funds (Not to exceed figure will be brought to the commission meeting.)

Covers state match needed to bring millions of Farm Bill dollars to Washington for RCPP projects

that unite multiple partners in solving natural resource issues. The SCC has been designated to pass-through required state capital match for RCPP projects. RCPP projects create jobs and make measurable progress on urgent issues, including water quality, fish and wildlife habitat restoration, drinking and irrigation water supply, forest health and wildfire resiliency, and farmland preservation. With the increase in federal funds investment in the RCPP, several new RCPPs are forming statewide who have approached the SCC for state match funding if they are successful in getting an RCPP award from USDA NRCS.

Requested Action (if action item):

Approve supplemental budget topics and not to exceed amounts listed above for submittal for the 2024 supplemental budget in accordance with the timelines given by OFM.

Staff Contact:

Sarah Groth, Director of Accounting and Budget

TAB 2

July 20, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, Interim 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 leadership and 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). RMs keep an eye on CAPP requirements as well as opportunities for improvement throughout the year and report districts' status with CAPP in May and July annually. 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 and a planning guide will be released 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, Livestock Technical Assistance, and RCPP 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. RMs also administered appropriated fire recovery funds, pass-through appropriations, and funds provided under contract from DNR and WDFW in FY23 as well.

As we wrapped up the end of the fiscal year and biennium, RMs were working diligently to be uber-responsive to district questions and concerns, track the wrap-up and vouchering of many funded projects and ensuring that reporting requirements for various grants were submitted timely.

Shana Joy is working with Alison Halpern to co-lead on the Salmon Recovery Funding program and new riparian appropriations in FY24. A separate report and memo are included for Commissioners in this meeting packet.

SCC-CD Round Tables

Regional Managers are hosting Round Table meetings via Zoom approximately monthly with districts to provide updates and information, answer questions, and open dialogue. At the June round table topics included a CTA supplemental funding request brainstorm, riparian programs feedback, and electronic signatures. The July 13th round table will include topics such as SCC program updates as we prepare multiple programs for implementation in the new biennium, more on supplemental budget request(s), and a District Implemented Project mini-training.

Disaster Assistance Program

Jean Fike worked with Whatcom Conservation District and an advisory committee comprised of representatives from WSDA, Whatcom CD and Whatcom Family Farmers to award the remaining funds to farmers and ranchers who sustained losses in the atmospheric river flooding event of November 2021. She is also working to revise the DAP program guidelines for future implementation, broadening the scope for use to respond to additional natural disasters that may occur with new FY24 funding.

Wildfire Recovery

Mike Baden, Allisa Carlson, and Courtney Woods administered the wildfire recovery grant program for FY23 and awarded the full \$1.5 million for fire recovery work. 47 projects were funded in all. Any unspent funds expired on June 30, 2023. A special appropriation is coming to the SCC for FY24-25 for Whitman County fire recovery projects. This new funding is likely to be administered in a similar way using our existing procedures.

Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resilience

Shana Joy administered funds to districts under two work orders made possible by a master Inter-Agency Agreement between SCC and DNR. Those work orders were wrapped at the end of June. Mike Baden wrapped up coordination with DNR on SCC/district work input into the [Forest Health Tracker](#). Shana continues to serve on the Forest Health Advisory Committee representing the SCC/CDs.

Forest health and community wildfire resiliency program guidelines were prepared for the new biennium to roll out new appropriations to conservation districts including a one-time appropriation of \$10 million for Firewise projects. Final guidelines will be presented to Commissioners at the July 20th meeting for potential action.

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. Allisa Carlson is representing the Pacific Region on a new DEI Task Force as well.

Regional managers participated in the WADE conference June 12-14th. Jean Fike led an outstanding Leadership track with numerous valuable presentations.

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 past 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 early 2024. A more in-depth presentation and a draft LTS will come before the Commissioners at the September or November 2023 Commission meetings. Grazing, wildfire protection, and habitat protection focus table discussions have been conducted to construct draft actions for the long-term strategy around these topics. Increased engagement with the Spokane Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and Yakama Tribe began with the steering committee making in-person visits with Tribe staff in Wellpinit, Nespelem, and Toppenish. A presentation to the WA Cattleman's Association will occur the third week in July in Ellensburg.

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](#). A future solicitation for habitat restoration projects is anticipated early in FY24 as the WSRRI team is preparing to deploy coordinated resources for recovery as we enter the 2023 fire season.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 20, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, Interim Executive Director

FROM: Shana Joy, District Operations & Regional Manager Coordinator

SUBJECT: 2023 Conservation Accountability and Performance Program Initial Report

Action Item

☐

Informational Item

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Summary:

Commissioners, at the January 2023 meeting, approved the Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (CAPP) Guidelines. The 15 Accountability Requirements (Standard 1) are based in law (RCW) and administrative code (WAC) for conservation districts. Completing or meeting 100% of these items is a threshold for receiving state funding through the Conservation Commission. An initial annual status report was provided to Commissioners on May 18th. This is the final annual CAPP status report for 2023 for information only at this time.

Staff Contact:

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

Background and Discussion:

Conservation Accountability and Performance Program Initial Conservation District Statuses:

Forty-five conservation districts are currently meeting the Accountability Standard 1 elements that can be evaluated at this time. For reference the Accountability Standard 1 elements are attached. These are status remarks around the accountability elements that Regional Managers continue to track on an ongoing basis:

Item 2. Three conservation districts are currently working on updating their long-range plans: Asotin County, Pacific, and San Juan Islands. It is anticipated that these will be completed during calendar year 2023, before the current plans expire.

Item 3. 100% of conservation districts submitted annual plans of work in a timely manner.

Item 11. 98% of conservation districts (44/45) submitted annual financial reporting to the State Auditor's Office on time. Rock Lake Conservation District (RLCD) was late in completing the reporting, but it has been completed as of the time of this report to the Commissioners. Additionally, RLCD is working with their Regional Manager to implement an action plan to ensure future timeliness of this reporting and to address other items identified in a recent audit.

Next Steps (if informational item):

Regional managers will continue to implement CAPP with conservation districts, bringing any emerging issues to Commissioners as appropriate. An initial annual report of CAPP status will be presented in May of 2024.

Chehalis Basin

Josh Giuntoli, SW RM, represents the Executive Director of the Commission as ex-officio member of the Chehalis Basin Board (CBB). After 5-years serving as executive director of the Office of Chehalis Basin (OCB), Andrea McNamara-Doyle has resigned her position to move back to her hometown of Bellingham, and work in part of the Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Hub initiative. Her resignation is effective as of June 16. Ecology Director Laura Watson recently appointed an interim director, Nat Kale. As principal planner, he was already working closely with many Chehalis Basin Strategy partners to advance the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan as well as working with family and property-scale flood assistance programs, and the Skookumchuck Dam analysis. He will be a great asset in the transition.

The board continues its process to revise the Chehalis Basin Strategy to address both flood and aquatics restoration in the Basin and which the Governor and Legislature has requested. There are several moving parts that impact this work, including the proposed Flood Retention Expandable (FRE) SEPA and NEPA review timelines. At the June meeting, the board approved a timeline for delivering the strategy to the legislature between fall 2024 and fall 2026.

SCC staff continues to coordinate with CDs and partners every other month. These are opportunities to share updates and information, identify possible issues, and generally stay connected. Work under existing contracts is wrapping up as we all look ahead to the next biennium. It is expected that the CDs will see a similar level of investment into their time and efforts on the aquatic side of the basin portfolio.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 20, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, SCC Interim Executive Director

FROM: Brian Cochrane, Habitat and Monitoring Coordinator

SUBJECT: CREP Monitoring and Lessons for Adaptive Management

Action Item

☐

Informational Item

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Summary:

Effectiveness monitoring conducted on CREP projects since 2006 is showing that while sites grow trees and shrubs well, and projects have been highly successful, assumptions regarding invasive species management, canopy, and functional outcomes need to be re-evaluated and adaptively managed to accomplish better outcomes for stream condition and salmonid health.

Requested Action:

None needed

Staff Contact:

Brian Cochrane

Background and Discussion:

Effectiveness monitoring on CREP sites is required by the state agreement with FSA. Monitoring with random transects on 20-30 sites/year has been accomplished regularly since 2006, resulting in a valuable data set for review and adaptive management actions to achieve better outcomes beyond the program's implementation success. The program manager has summarized growth rates of shrubs, deciduous and conifers on all sites, assessed percent invasive species on all transects, and examined canopy measurements from wade-able streams, in addition to recently conducting a functional assessment using a modified NRCS Stream Visual Assessment Protocol (SVAP).

Growth rates of shrubs, deciduous and conifer trees are generally consistent and most sites compare favorably with the hypothesis question of whether the site growth rates are drawn from the same population of all growth rates observed by monitoring to date. Where growth rates are not similar, they are generally either much faster, as found on former cropland with fertilizer, or the component (generally shrubs or deciduous trees) have been shaded out by other components. Percent invasive species shows that 50% of all transects have fewer than 20% invasive species present (great news), however, that means that half of the transects have more than 20% invasive

species. When compared to age of planting, no obvious relationship is discernable, indicating that the program assumption that 5 years of state funded maintenance will allow canopy to develop and shade out invasive species isn't holding up.

Canopy measurements have been collected mid-stream from wade-able streams for each transect. Most streams either weren't wade-able, or, had no canopy provided by the project trees. This latter case can be lumped into four types: 1) the site was simply too young, and planted trees weren't contributing; 2) existing trees on the shoreline continued to be the dominant source of shade and no project trees contributed to canopy and shade, even with relatively mature project growth; 3) the stream was incised to the extent that the incision itself contributed the majority of the shade on the stream and project trees above the incision didn't contribute; and 4) the stream had moved away from the project or the summer low flow channel was substantially removed from the project. Small stream canopy from projects was very evident, however, assumptions that the program projects would broadly enhance canopy, shade and stream temperature need re-examined.

Lastly, elements of SVAP that should relate buffer benefit to stream functions were examined in the most recent monitoring in the fall of 2022. SVAP measures each function on a 1-10 scale, then averages the scores to arrive at an index. NRCS considers scores >7 as functioning. Scores from the 20 sites sampled showed that most (65%) did not meet 'function', and examination of individual functions showed that stream structure, fish habitat, aquatic invertebrate habitat, canopy absence or invasive species presence contributed to the lower scores (most in the 5-6 range). What this doesn't tell us is where these sites started, and the change brought about by the project nor does a single SVAP assessment tell us about the trend or trajectory of the site. It could be we haven't waited long enough to see function occurring.

While CREP has been a success in terms of trees and acres planted, and farmland separated from streams, clearly this monitoring is suggesting improvement could be in order. For example, the 5-year state sponsored maintenance needs re-examined. Should maintenance be longer? Or is a lack of site preparation (allowed costs for site preparation are considered barely adequate) allowing invasive species to hold on in spite of the buffer plantings? Should streams with existing large trees at the shoreline be allowed to enroll or do we focus on bare-to-the-edge cropland where the project would dramatically return riparian function? If canopy, shade, and temperature are of interest, should we focus only on small streams where the effect is more observable compared to large streams where riparian canopy has much less influence on stream temperatures? Should incised streams be planted when the benefit to shade and stream structure are not addressed by the project? Beaver activity typically changes the site hydrology, to the detriment of some riparian plants, yet beaver ponds make great coho rearing habitat – should habitat and function be the measure rather than tree growth rate and overall canopy? Should the program allow instream work to benefit fish and invertebrate habitat to provide more stream function and benefit?

Adaptive management means change. Some existing sites and plantings may not be allowed in the future. Some sites may merit additional incentives. Some new techniques should be allowed in the program. We are currently developing a framework for a revised program that considers these results, procedural changes, and monitoring changes needed to determine what is and isn't possible within the confines of CRP. Those ideas will be open for review by CREP districts and

other parties. A new contract with FSA, as well as new environmental documentation will be developed as a result of the adaptive management exercise.

Next Steps (if informational item):

Working with FSA and NRCS to amend State agreement to achieve better outcomes.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 20,2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, SCC Interim-Executive Director

FROM: Jon K Culp, Water Resources Program Manager

SUBJECT: Diversity Workgroup Update

Action Item

☐

Informational Item

☒

Summary:

The Commission's DEI Workgroup has had a busy couple of months. The team is looking to the future using the newly completed agency assessment. The assessment identified areas for improvement and some recommendations on how to achieve progress.

Continuing Progress

The group continue to discuss ways to communicate, both internally and externally, to normalize equitable language and the concept that conservation belongs to everyone.

The workgroup is working with Lori to ensure that the agency's personnel policy on DEI reflects the recommendations from the agency assessment. Any updated recommendations will come back to the commissioners for discussion prior to adoption.

Roadmap Forward

Working on a process that will engage districts for input relative to areas for improvement in our agency systems. The assessment identified opportunities to begin conversations later this summer and into the fall.

The DEI Workgroup will draft recommendations or a plan to present to the commissioners at the November meeting.

Community Engagement Planning

Staff work has begun on our Community Engagement Plan. This plan is a requirement tied to that portion of the Commission's budget allocation funded with Climate Commitment Act funding. The Healthy Environment for All Act (HEAL) was passed by the Legislature in 2021, under Chapter

70A.02 RCW, which provides a roadmap for integrating environmental justice into state agencies. The Commission received funding for this planning effort and intends to hire a consultant to draft the plan.

Staff Contact:

Jon K Culp, Water Resources Program Manager jculp@scc.wa.gov

Next Steps:

The staff workgroup continues to work with the assessment to identify priorities for development. The personnel policy on DEI expectations is under review with the expectations and recommendations outlined in the assessment document.

Finalize a path forward for input from interested conservation districts to gather input on our agency systems as identified in the DEI Assessment.

Staff continue to work through the Community Engagement Planning Process. We are currently working on the Request For Information (RFI) in order to hire a qualified and compatible consultant to work with SCC to develop our plan.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 20, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, SCC Interim-Executive Director

FROM: Jon K Culp, Water Resources Program Manager

SUBJECT: Drought Conditions Update

Action Item

☐

Informational Item

☒

Summary:

Welcome to another interesting water year for Washington. Early winter snowpack and precipitation were looking promising through April, but hotter than normal temperatures caused a quick melt out. On April 23rd, about two weeks later due to a cold winter, statewide snowpack peaked at 111% of normal snow-water-equivalent.

The month of May's record warm temperatures tied with May 1958 as the warmest May since 1895. Over the 60 days prior to the first week of July, the state felt temperatures in the 90th percentile or above for the state average. In that same time period, the precipitation has fallen below the 10th percentile for most of the state west of the Cascades and the Southeastern corner.

As of the first week of July, many junior water right holders have had their diversions curtailed due to earlier than normal low flows. So far, diverters in Hangman Creek, Spokane river, Walla Walla River, Okanogan River, Methow River, Yakima River, Nooksack River, and the Skagit River watersheds have been impacted. Staff have also received lower than average streamflow in some tributaries to the Upper Yakima River basin.

The three-month forecasted outlook indicates warmer than normal temperatures through September. The same period also indicates lower than normal precipitation. Due to existing conditions and no forecasted relief, an emergency declaration is highly likely. A declaration, if made, would be geographically isolated to those areas suffering from hydrologically, and suffering anticipated hardship due to this lack of normal water supply.

Staff Contact:

Jon K Culp, Water Resources Program Manager jculp@scc.wa.gov

Next Steps:

Staff will continue to reach out to districts within the affected areas to gather anecdotal and other evidence of hardship to water users due to a lack of normal water supply.

Staff will continue to monitor the situation while working with the Departments of Ecology and Agriculture to assist wherever we can.



Washington State Conservation Commission

July 20, 2023

TO: Conservation Commission Members
Kirk Robinson, SCC Interim Executive Director

FROM: Paige DeChambeau, Communications Director

SUBJECT: After-action review of the 2023 Conservation Month

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

Summary:

The SCC communications team has drafted a communications plan outlining the tasks and budget proposed for the \$2 million allocated last legislative session for a targeted riparian and outreach campaign.

Staff Contact:

Paige DeChambeau, Communications Director, pdechambeau@scc.wa.gov

Background and Discussion:

During the 2023 legislative session, \$2 million was allocated to the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) to develop an educational campaign highlighting the importance of buffers and creating a call to action to help and protect these areas.

SCC, Office of Financial Management representatives, and the governor's office worked to develop the broad strokes of a plan regarding this campaign. Several possible scenarios were laid out depending on any funding allocated by the Legislature during the 2023 session for SCC to implement this outreach campaign. Since the amount was fully funded at \$2 million, this campaign plan will detail the most robust scenarios.

The budget proviso language says, "Funding is provided solely to develop and implement an educational communication plan to the general public and landowners in urban, suburban, rural, agricultural, and forested areas regarding the importance of riparian buffers and the actions they can take to protect and enhance these critical areas."

The main highlights of the plan include the following:

- **Key messages (subject to change):**
 1. Riparian buffers are critical areas that protect water quality, provide habitat for wildlife, and support healthy ecosystems.
 2. Everyone can take action to protect and enhance riparian buffers, such as planting native vegetation, minimizing pesticide and fertilizer use, and reducing erosion and sedimentation.
 3. Riparian buffers provide multiple benefits, including flood mitigation, carbon sequestration, and recreational opportunities.

- **Management:** SCC will hire an Outreach and Education Manager to help manage the entirety of the campaign.
- **Timeline:** This campaign will span multiple years and probably conclude in early 2026.
- **Budget:** The total budget for this campaign is \$2 million.
- **Audiences:** The “general public” is taken directly from the proviso language, and we would say that this work could be more targeted to landowners and land users of all sizes who can help implement conservation practices on their land. As well as people who do not own land but would like to help with this effort.

There will be multiple phases laid out below:

- **Phase 1 (pre-launch):** Hiring, research and planning, market research, focus groups asset development, stakeholder engagement, and media outreach. (2023)
- **Phase 2 (launch):** Campaign assets rollout, the release of videos, infographics, BMP catalog, and organization of public events. (2024 -2025)
- **Phase 3 (sustained outreach):** Ongoing social media engagement, media buys, regular updates to website content, and continued collaboration with partners. (2025)
- **Phase 4 (evaluation):** Creation of the final report evaluating the campaign’s success. (Early 2026)

The full outreach and education plan is included in your packet.

Next Steps (if informational item):

The SCC communications team will work with human resources to hire the new team member. We will also be working with the Salmon Recovery Council, Tribes, and other interested parties to start to plan and implement this work as soon as possible.

2023 Riparian Education and Outreach



Project Roadmap | June 26, 2023

Compiled by the SCC Communications Team:

- **Paige DeChambeau**, Communications Director, pdechambeau@scc.wa.gov
- **Sarah Wilcox**, Communications Project Manager, swilcox@scc.wa.gov
- **Toyo Garber**, Communications Specialist, tggarber@scc.wa.gov

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Introduction

Background

During the 2023 legislative session, \$2 million was allocated to the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) to develop an educational campaign highlighting the importance of buffers and creating a call to action to help and protect these areas.

SCC, Office of Financial Management representatives, and the governor's office worked to develop the broad strokes of a plan regarding this campaign. Several possible scenarios were laid out depending on any funding allocated by the Legislature during the 2023 session for SCC to implement this outreach campaign. Since the amount was fully funded at \$2 million, this campaign plan will detail the most robust scenarios.

Proviso language

The budget proviso language says, "Funding is provided solely to develop and implement an educational communication plan to the general public and landowners in urban, suburban, rural, agricultural, and forested areas regarding the importance of riparian buffers and the actions they can take to protect and enhance these critical areas."

Campaign overview

Overall, this campaign plan seeks to engage a diverse range of audiences in different settings using a variety of communication channels and creative assets. By focusing on the benefits of riparian buffers and the actions that individuals and communities can take to protect and enhance them, this campaign aims to build a constituency of informed and engaged advocates for healthy ecosystems and sustainable land use practices.

Objectives

To develop and implement an educational communication plan to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of riparian buffers and encourage actions that protect and enhance these critical areas among the general public and landowners and land users in urban, suburban, rural, agricultural, and forested areas.

Target audiences

- **General public:** Adults and youth of all ages and backgrounds, especially those concerned with the health of Washington's salmon and waters.
- **Landowners/land users:** Ranging from homeowners, farmers, and ranchers to forest landowners.
- **Small-acreage land users:** A portion of the money is allocated to create a handout for people who could consider themselves "hobby farmers" or "homesteaders." These people usually have some property but may not rely on their farming activities for their sole income.

Key messages

- Riparian buffers are critical areas that protect water quality, provide habitat for wildlife, and support healthy ecosystems.
- Everyone can take action to protect and enhance riparian buffers, such as planting native vegetation, minimizing pesticide and fertilizer use, and reducing erosion and sedimentation.
- Riparian buffers provide multiple benefits, including flood mitigation, carbon sequestration, and recreational opportunities.

Communication channels

- **Social media:** Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.
- **Paid advertising:** TV, radio, and streaming services.
- **Website:** Dedicated campaign website with educational resources, interactive maps, and links to partner organizations.
- **Public events:** Workshops, webinars, and field tours.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborations with local conservation districts, environmental organizations, and schools.
- **Earned media:** Earned media is working closing with members of the press by pitching interesting stories that they would like to pick up for free. This could range from newspapers, radio stations, or podcasts.
- **Partners:** Another important communication channel is working closely with partners across the state to help us spread the message. This could include Tribal colleagues, other state agencies and nonprofits.

Campaign research

There are several unknowns when it comes to advertising within this area. Therefore, part of the project would include focus groups and/or demographic research.

Creative assets

Creative assets are all promotional products developed in a communications campaign. Those items can include but are not limited to logos, social media graphics, videos, audio-only advertisements, websites, and printed materials.

Some of the assets we plan to develop for this project are:

- **Videos:** Short animations and interviews with experts and landowners that can be used on social media and as advertisements on television and/or streaming services.
- **Radio ads:** Short audio-only advertisements to play on radio stations and streaming stations like Spotify, iHeart Radio, or Pandora.
- **Infographics:** Visual representations of key concepts and statistics
- **Maps:** Interactive maps of riparian areas and restoration projects
- **Posters:** Eye-catching designs with simple tips and calls to action
- **Best management practices catalog:** An eye-catching and easily understood magazine-type handout that could be printed in bulk.

Proposed budget

This campaign has a \$2 million budget.

With a budget of \$2 million that is one-time funding for this biennium, SCC plans to divide the funding for this project into the following areas. Table 1 is a quick rundown of how we propose to use the money throughout different phases of the project, along with deliverables and any important items of note.

Staff

Part of the allocated funding will be used to hire an SCC communications staff member to manage this project. Currently, the funding is allocated for this two-year cycle, but SCC is hopeful that we will be able to find the funds needed to retain this position permanently.

The position proposed was a communications consultant, classification four (CC4). The incumbent for this position would ideally have experience managing a large statewide campaign in a previous position, experience working with various stakeholders, a good understanding of the need for more riparian awareness across the state, and a background in environmental education.

Best Management Practice (BMP) catalog

Another aspect of this campaign includes creating and supporting the development and printing of a BMP catalog that could be handed out. The idea is to have an easy-to-read-and-follow, multi-page, printed handout that conservation districts could give to small or beginning farmers that lays out some of the best practices they could engage with on their property. This is something that the Communications, Partnership, and Outreach (or CPO) group started but has not been able to finish due to staff capacity.

Marketing firm

A large chunk of the resources will go towards hiring a marketing firm that will help to develop the advertising and research for this project. It is currently unknown if one firm can do all the work of market research, focus groups, and ad buying or if this work will need to be split up among several different working groups.

Advertising

There is also money set aside for the purchasing of advertisements. This could be included in the funding paid to the marketing firm, which would help SCC handle advertising buys or it could be its own separate contract. SCC will continue to iron out those details.

Focus groups and demographic research

Funding is set aside for both focus groups and demographic research. We hope some of this work will be accomplished by the chosen marketing firm, but it may have to be its own contract or Request for Proposal

Conservation district micro-grants

Funding is also intended to be given to districts in micro-grants of \$5000 to help with their education and outreach efforts around riparian education. These grant opportunities will be encouraged to serve as demonstration and experimental projects to help us all find the best ways to engage with Washingtonians.

Table 1: Proposed allocation of resources

Item purchased	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Deliverables	Notes
Education and Outreach Manager (CC4)	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$110,000	Manage all the aspects of the campaign	Salaries and benefits (this cost will depend on several hiring variabilities)
CD pass-through grants	---	\$50,000	\$50,000	Reports on the use of funding for micro-grants	\$5,000 micro-grants to districts
Marketing firm	---	\$240,000	\$1,000,000	For asset development (videos, radio ads, etc.)	
Catalog development	---	\$10,000	---	Handouts for small farmers or gardeners	Some of this will be for development and some for printing costs
Direct buys	---	---	\$250,000	Buying time on media outlets	Local TV \$15k, National TV \$115k, Youtube \$45k, Hulu \$60K, Social Media \$15k
Focus groups	---	\$80,000	\$10,000	Hire a firm or do in-house?	
Demographic research	---	\$90,000	---		
Total	\$110,000	\$580,000	\$1,420,000		\$2,000,000 allocated in the budget

Timeline

Implementation phases

- **Phase 1 (pre-launch):** Hiring, research and planning, market research, focus groups asset development, stakeholder engagement, and media outreach.
- **Phase 2 (launch):** Campaign assets rollout, release of videos, infographics, BMP catalog, and organization of public events.
- **Phase 3 (sustained outreach):** Ongoing social media engagement, media buys, regular updates to website content, and continued collaboration with partners.
- **Phase 4 (evaluation):** Creation of the final report evaluating the success of the campaign.

Phase 1: Pre-Launch

Please note that this timeline is subject to change as there may be unforeseeable challenges with timelines and contracts that will need to be completed. There will also need to be some variability allocated for SCC staff capacity to help get this project off the ground.

The first step in this campaign will be to hire an education and outreach manager to manage the multiple aspects of this project. Once hired, the manager will spend their time during this phase focusing on research and planning, asset development, and stakeholder engagement for the campaign. A timeline is set out below.

2023	Tasks	Notes
July – Oct.	Hire an outreach & education manager	The timing of this depends on the HR capacity of SCC
Fall	Start researching marketing firms and their ability to help with market research and focus groups or if they need separate contracts.	Decide if these can be direct buys, use the statewide contracts, or RFPs.
Fall	Work on RFP and contracts	RFPs and contracts can take up to 3 months to implement.
Nov. – Dec.	Hire a marketing firm and work on setting up focus groups and market research	This must be done before we develop any marketing plan or assets.
Dec.	Start developing and implementing focus groups and market research plans	SCC would create the plans and desired outcomes and a firm with experience to implement them.

Phase 2: Launch

After the initial groundwork is in place and contracts are signed, the second phase of this campaign will be the launch. This will include the rollout of social media campaign(s), the launch of a dedicated website, the release of videos and infographics, and the organization of public events. We would plan to try and launch the campaign at the beginning of 2024.

2024	Tasks	Notes
Jan. - March	Start to develop creative assets for the BMP catalog and work with the firms to finalize plans for focus groups and demographic research.	
April - June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with firms to start to do focus groups and demographic research. • Start to develop micro-grants and work with conservation districts to collect applications. 	It will probably take about 3 months to do focus groups and market research. Then another 2-3 months to finalize creative assets. That means we will need a total of 6 months from the contracts being signed to launch the campaign.
July – Sept.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap up focus groups and demographic research. Develop a marketing plan using those reports. • Start to plan advertising plans with media outlets like TVW, WA Grown, and earned media to do stories. • Allocate micro-grant awards. 	
Oct. – Dec.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start to run paid ads on the radio, newspapers (print and digital), and social media. • Create a report on the micro-grants. • Have the printed BMP catalog ready to hand out for the WACD conference in December. 	Work with the creative agency to buy the ads.

Phase 3: Sustained outreach

Once the campaign launches in 2024, SCC will continue to do outreach through 2025. Phase 3 is considered sustained outreach because we will build on the completed work momentum. This phase includes ongoing social media advertisements, updates to the web content as needed, development of more earned media and advertising plans, distributing the BMP catalogs to the districts, and continued collaboration with partners.

Also during this phase, the outreach and engagement manager will start collecting data and developing a preliminary after-action report that can be given to all the stakeholders involved.

2025	Tasks	Notes
Jan. - March	Start to develop micro-grants and start printing and handing out BMP catalogs to districts, start purchasing paid media	
April - June	Work with media outlets like TVW, WA Grown, and earned media to do stories. Continuing to run ads as needed	Work in tandem with Conservation Month
June – Sept.	Start to collect data and provide preliminary reports to share the progress of the campaign with SCC leadership, commissioners, the governor's office, and other stakeholders.	Possibly conduct a survey of some kind for Washingtonians.

Oct. – Dec.	Collect data and start to write the after-action report.	
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Phase 4: Evaluation

In Phase 4, SCC will produce an after-action review where we dive into what worked well, what didn't work well, lessons learned, and any recommendations to continue to promote riparian education and outreach.

2026	Tasks	Notes
January commission meeting	Turn in the after-action report to SCC leadership and the Gov.'s office	

Evaluation of deliverables

How will we evaluate success?

Awareness campaigns are notoriously hard to measure. However, this campaign will be multi-faceted and will have several different ways that success can be measured. The plan below outlines a few of the tactics we could take to evaluate whether the campaign was successful.

How do you track awareness?

Awareness can be a tricky concept to measure. However, if we conduct focus groups and market research before and after the campaign, we can measure if and how the message reached people across the state. We could also conduct surveys to measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to riparian habitat and how many people interacted with their local conservation district. This would especially be true if we had a way for districts to measure how people learned about their programs.

- **Digital data:** The easiest way to measure how many people see or interact with the message is through digital data collection. This can be done by tracking website traffic, social media engagement, and reports from paid media.
- **Advertisement tracking:** When buying any kind of advertisement, the media source should be able to give us some estimate of reach and impressions that the advertising dollars will buy. For digital ad tracking, they should then be able to give us actual numbers for that kind of reach after the completion of the ad run.
- **Surveys:** SCC, or the firms we hire, could have a survey component built in where we try to measure the before and after general knowledge of riparian buffers and conservation districts to try and determine if the message is breaking through the noise to reach residents.

Other measurement tools:

- **Environmental factors:** Monitoring ecological indicators, such as water quality, biodiversity, and vegetation cover in selected riparian areas.
- **District interactions:** If districts see a sharp incline in areas like calls, workload, or backlog, it may be attributable to this campaign. SCC also recognizes that there are other reasons this could happen.
- **District elections:** Another measurement could be increased participation in conservation district elections. If people know about conservation district work and participate in some kind of riparian management, they are probably more likely to vote in their local district election.
- **Partner engagement:** We can also measure our engagement from our partners like the Tribes and other state agencies and nonprofits. We can also measure how often other people engaged with our message and shared it with their specific audiences.
- **Earned media placements:** During the campaign, we will keep track of all the earned media around this topic and try to estimate the reach of that media.

Resources

Other campaign examples

- SCC's Conservation Month materials can be found here: <https://www.scc.wa.gov/voting-in-your-local-election>.
- Links to the other BMP catalogs examples:
 - [Practices for Conserving Pennsylvania's Natural Resources](#)
 - [Conservation Choices for Maryland Farmers](#)



The Chief's Message: Be Innovative, Be Aggressive

By Roylene Comes At Night
NRCS-WA State Conservationist

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. – One of the most amazing points Chief Cosby reiterated throughout his tour of Washington was how the Natural Resource Conservation Service is made whole through its Partnerships with people just like all of you. We simply cannot succeed in helping people help the land without listening to, understanding, and incorporating all your local knowledge and wisdom.

It really was an amazing tour, and I look forward to the months' worth of thank yous I owe to people across the state for making it such a beautiful event. Having the opportunity to share how amazing Washington is, with all our different crops and landscapes, he was just in awe. He even questioned why he had not made it out sooner! I really think we are going to see much more of him as time goes on. Especially if it's peach harvesting season! It turns out peaches are one of his favorite fruits.

Before I talk about the nuts and bolts of the future he discussed, I want to share how lucky we are to have Terry as our Chief. It's been a while since we've had a Chief whose as experienced with our organization as he is. While you can read more about his biography at the end of the news story about the tour, one of the most important elements of his distinguished career is how he has worked in NRCS conservation, all the way from starting as an intern in Iowa, to 40 plus years later being our Chief. He just gets us, and he knows what it takes for us to be successful – and that's all of you. ([Cont. Pg. 2](#))



Terry Cosby (*right*), Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, visits with staff from the Yakama Nation, July 13, 2023. (USDA/NRCS photo by Austin Shero.)

Chief Cosby tours NRCS-WA projects

NRCS-Washington Staff Report

OLYMPIA – Terry Cosby, Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), toured multiple locations across Washington June 11 to 13.

On the first day, the Columbia Basin Conservation District (CBCD) and the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District (ECBID) jointly hosted a tour of the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program (OGWRP) in Grant and Adams Counties. Dignitaries accompanying the Chief included Astor Boozer, NRCS regional conservationist for the West Region; ...

([Cont. Pg. 3](#))

**Washington
Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service**





The Chief's Message *(continued)*

(Continued from Page 1.)

Locally led conservation is our foundation. It is what we are built on and from. Now, we, as a conservation family, are facing a once-in-a-generation opportunity with this unprecedented investment in conservation utilizing the Inflation Reduction Act funding. What does that mean for our family?

For starters, we're busy hiring and training news staff (my goal is more than 60 by the end of the fiscal year!) We've been thinking big about conservation and building new grants, agreements, and contracts that can help us help producers help their lands. This isn't just for hiring staff, but new ways to train and effectively communicate with people across the state.

I really loved it when the Chief said we need to be innovative and aggressive with our ideas and finding every way to make best use of this opportunity. The meaning there is not lost on me. I often think of all of you and have challenged my staff with figuring out how we can work even closer together. I have a simple ask. If you have any ideas on how we could partner to take advantage of this IRA opportunity, please reach out to me or my staff. We're listening.



Terry Cosby, Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (*right*), shares a laugh with Representative Tom Dent, 13th District state representative, during a tour of the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program, June 12, 2023 (*USDA/NRCS photo by Austin Shero.*)



Terry Cosby, Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, speaks with people attending the Washington Association of District Employees Annual Conference in Leavenworth Washington June 13, 2023. (*USDA/NRCS photo by Austin Shero.*)



Chief Cosby discusses the Yakama Nation's investment in the restoration of prehistoric lamprey habitat, through RCPP.



Chief Cosby tours NRCS-WA projects *(cont.)*

... Roylene Comes At Night

Washington State conservationist; Washington State Representatives Tom Dent, Mary Dye and Joe Schmick, Washington State Senator Judy Warnick, Derek Sandison of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, Tom Tebb of Washington State Department of Ecology's Office of the Columbia River, landowners, and leadership of the host organizations.

The group of dignitaries visited sites along planned and constructed laterals, siphons, and pump stations to better understand the magnitude of this programs and what projects need to be implemented to recharge the groundwater. The group talked about the objectives of the program, which include helping 22 communities, preserving the \$3 billion agriculture industry, and recharging the aquifer.

"It was a real honor to show Chief Cosby and West Regional Conservationist Astor Boozer this program and tremendous potential for NRCS to partners. NRCS is honored to work with the many partners, leadership, and local producers to have support from the National Office to finish this project that was proposed over 40 years ago," said Roylene.

The next day, the Chief made morning remarks and answered questions over breakfast with Washington Association of District Employees. This Association is the voice for more than 300 conservation district (CD) employees in which 17 CDs have help NRCS with workload over the years. The next stop was Kittitas County, where the Kittitas Conservation District (KCD)



has successfully implemented the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). NRCS leadership toured fish passage projects on Manastash Creek. While the creek was dry in 2009, salmon-habitat friendly water now flows thanks to strong partnerships that implemented irrigation water saving practices, piped water instead of open ditches, and other practices.

The Chief then traveled to the Yakama Nation where he was able to witness, and assist, with the release of several lamprey into the river, furthering the Yakama Nation's investment in the restoration of prehistoric lamprey habitat, through RCPP. Finally, the whirlwind tour ended at Barker Ranch, where Michael Crowder, the past president of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) and manager of Barker Ranch which is a Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) easement with NRCS. Barker Ranch also hosted a group of state, tribal, local, and national conservation leaders and partners for a reception and dinner.

"All in all, it was an amazing tour," Roylene said. "We couldn't be more thankful and appreciate

for the time partners committed for amazing event. It really gave us an opportunity to highlight and celebrate the amazing things our partners, staff and friends are doing across the state, yet the very valuable and close relationships we share with all of them."

During Chief Cosby's 40+ years with NRCS, he has held numerous leadership and staff positions. He began his career as an NRCS intern in Iowa in 1979 and rose through the agency's ranks to become its 17th chief on May 24, 2021. Terry's conservation and agricultural roots run deep. He grew up on his family's cotton farm and attended a land grant university that prepared him well to serve all producers, including those who were historically underserved. Prior to being named Acting Chief, Terry served as NRCS State Conservationist in Ohio for 16 years. His other leadership positions include Deputy State Conservationist in Idaho, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Missouri, and Area Resource Conservationist in Iowa.





West Area

By David Rose

West Area Conservationist

Staff Actions. We are working to fill the following vacancies: Area Forester in Olympia/Mt. Vernon/Vancouver; Resource Conservationist (RC) positions in Port Angeles, Renton, Olympia, Longview and Puyallup; Civil Engineer in Lake Stevens; Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) Engineer position in the Area Office located in Olympia; CNMP Planner position in the Area Office located in Olympia; Soil Conservationist (SC) positions in Bremerton and Chehalis.

We have made selections for the Area Cultural Resources Specialist (CRS) in Olympia; Area Civil Engineering Technician (CET) in Olympia; Southwest Team CET in Chehalis; SC (Pathways Recent Grad) in Everson; and SC positions in Puyallup and Vancouver. All names will be shared once they've arrived.

New employees in the area include; Jelani Christmas (Soil Conservationist 1890's Scholar Intern in Lake Stevens), Chloe Clegg (Soil Conservationist Pathways Intern in Chehalis), Helaine Berris (Soil Conservationist in Renton), Aaron Oman (Soil Conservationist in Port Angeles), Pandora Mondragon (Soil Conservationist in Puyallup), Ben Carroll (Resource Conservationist in Montesano).

Jared Hamman, Area RCPP Coordinator, will be on detail to the national office for 120 days starting 4/24.

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.

The current snapshot for the FY23 Financial Assistance Programs for the West Area shows the following: 73 current preapprovals for EQIP with 61 contracts obligated. 18 current preapprovals for CSP with 4 contracts obligated. These totals do include some IRA preapprovals and contracts also. Initial indications are that we have approximately 20% more applications than last year.

Central Area

By Austin Shero

East Area Conservationist

Partners and agencies continue to address needs in the Odessa Aquifer area. In June, the partner working group hosted NRCS Chief Terry Cosby. They were able to showcase some early project successes, along with future plans and needs for the project to be successful. It was a truly amazing event and tour. A huge thank you to our wonderful partners, conservation districts, and elected officials. This project has buy in from top to bottom, and it certainly shows.

We continued on with Chief Cosby throughout several more stops in the Central Area. From meeting with the WADE group in Leavenworth, to Manastash Creek with the Kittitas CD, to Toppenish Creek lamprey release with the Yakama Nation, to WRE site visit on the Barker Ranch. From his first stop in Washington, the Chief didn't leave the Central Area until he got back on his flight! It was amazing to showcase our collaborative partnership efforts, and have the Chief meet some amazing partners.

The NRCS Central Area is wrapping up obligating Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contracts for Fiscal Year 2023. 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 2023, including 3 new RCPP agreements, WaterSmart Initiative, and Conservation Stewardship Program opportunities. We will continue to do great EQIP work, but will put a high priority on Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications and contracts moving into the future (FY24 and beyond).

NRCS is entering into a new era with the addition of Inflation Reduction Act. This new period will only continue to strengthen our relationships with key partners across the state, and with current 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, and throughout the state! We'll be working with partners and entering into agreements over the next few years to expand capacity to deliver critical programs. These conversations are continuing to take shape currently, and will be expanding in the coming months.

We appreciate our amazing partners, and truly could not accomplish our mission without your support. It truly means the world to us, as well as myself.





Ecological Sciences



Cultural Resources Challenges are History

By Robert D. Evans

NRCS-WA State Resource Conservationist

As you may be aware, we experienced substantial transition within our cultural resource specialists (CRS) in FY22. Between retirements, an employee taking a new position, and an internal promotion all area level CRS positions have experienced turn over within the last year. For months, NRCS-WA only had one area cultural resource specialist, who did their best to cover the needs of the entire state. However, I'm happy to say that the transition in staffing is nearly complete. Now, NRCS-WA is back and better than ever.

For the first time ever, NRCS-WA now has a state archaeologist, Grant Smith, who was formerly our east area CRS. Grant's expertise and leadership of cultural resources will improve the efficiency and effectivity of our efforts.

As for the three area CRS positions, we've already onboarded one position and interviews and selections have been made. The central area selected Brianna Patterson, who started this June. The east and west areas have already made interviews and selections for their CRS positions, and these folks will be joining our ranks in the near future.

In addition, NRCS-WA plans to add more capacity to our CRS staff through staffing and agreements. Moving forward, cultural resources will have a robust staff capable of taking on the additional workload and challenges presented by our additional Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding.

East Area

Staff Actions

By Cari Roepke

Acting East Area Conservationist

Aubrey Hoxie is on maternity leave until July 17. **Cari Roepke** (District Conservationist in West Palouse Team) is acting Area Conservationist in Aubrey's absence.

Melissa Pierce and **Logan Carr** started in Spokane Valley as a Soil Conservationist on June 5th.

Byron Gagnon started in Davenport on June 5th as a Natural Resource Career Development Program summer intern.

Mary Hein also started on June 20th as a new Soil Conservationist in Colfax.

Tribal

Jon George is Acting State Tribal Liaison for approximately 30 days while Robin Slate is on medical leave. NRCS-WA is currently looking for an employee to volunteer to act in the position for 120 days. Updates will be released as information becomes available





Management & Strategy

As of April 20, 2023, during FY23 NRCS WA has filled 32 positions many of which are backfills. Currently, there are 106 positions in process to be advertised and filled. The 106 positions include new NRCS staff identified as needed to implement IRA activities but does not include an additional 44 IRA positions to be filled using agreements with partners or contracts.

Positions Filled in FY23	Location
Administrative Assistant	Ephrata
Administrative Assistant	Olympia
Administrative Assistant	Spokane SO
Administrative Assistant	Spokane SO
Administrative Assistant	Spokane SO
Area Easement Position	Yakima
Area Program Specialist	Olympia
Biological Science Technician	Pullman PMC
Civil Engineer	Pasco
Cultural Resources Specialist (CRS)	Ephrata
CRS Archeologist - State	Spokane SO
District Conservationist	Ephrata
District Conservationist	Puyallup
Program Specialist (Easements)	Spokane SO
Program Support Assistant	Puyallup
Public Affairs Specialist	Spokane SO
Resource Conservationist	Montesano
Resource Conservationist	Waterville
Resource Conservationist	Wenatchee
Resource Conservationist	Wenatchee
Soil Conservationist	Colfax
Soil Conservationist	Davenport
Soil Conservationist	Pasco
Soil Conservationist	Port Angeles
Soil Conservationist	Puyallup
Soil Conservationist	Renton
Soil Conservationist	Spokane Valley
Soil Conservationist	Spokane Valley
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Chehalis
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Davenport
Soil Conservationist (1890 Scholar)	Lake Stevens
Urban Team Soil Conservationist	Olympia

Hiring Actions in Process	Location
Admin Prog Spec (HR Specialist)	Spokane
Area Agronomist	Ephrata
Area Agronomist	Spokane
Area Civil Engineering Technician	Ephrata, Wenatchee, Ellensburg
Area Civil Engineering Technician	Olympia
Area Civil Engineering Technician	Spokane
Area Easement positions	Ephrata, Ellensburg
Area Forester	Olympia
Area Range Specialist	Spokane
Area Resource Conservationist	Spokane EAO
Civil Engineering Technician	Chehalis
Civil Engineering Technician / Engineer	Colville
Civil Engineering Technician / Engineer	Ephrata
CNMP Ag Engineer	Olympia
CNMP Ag Engineer	Spokane
CNMP Specialist	Olympia
CNMP Specialist	Spokane EAO
Cultural Resources Specialist	Olympia
Cultural Resources Specialist	Spokane
District Conservationist - Yakama Tribal Team	Toppenish
Engineer	Mt Vernon / Lake Stevens
Engineer	Ephrata or Yakima
Engineer	Spokane
Forester	Colville
Forester	Ellensburg
Forester - State Forester	Spokane SO
Management Analyst (Grants and Agreements)	Spokane SO
Pathways Recent Grad (Soil Conservationist)	Colfax
Pathways (Engineer)	Ephrata
Pathways (Engineer)	Spokane Valley
Pathways (Engineer)	Wenatchee
Pathways (Natural Resources)	Puyallup



Management & Strategy *(cont.)*

Hiring Actions in Process	Location
Pathways (Recent Graduate)	Chehalis
Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Davenport
Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Lake Stevens
Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Mt Vernon
Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Okanogan
Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Olympia
Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Pasco
Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Ritzville
Pathways (Soil Conservationist)	Yakima
Program Support Assistant	Colville
Program Support Assistant	Davenport
Program Support Assistant	Ephrata
Program Support Assistant	Yakima
Rangeland Mgmt Specialist	Colville
Rangeland Mgmt Specialist	Goldendale
Rangeland Mgmt Specialist	Ritzville
RCPD Coordinator	Ephrata, Ellensburg, Wenatchee, Yakima
Realty Specialist	Spokane SO
Resource Conservationist (Recent Grad)	Ephrata
Resource Conservationist	Olympia
Resource Conservationist	Port Angeles
Resource Conservationist	Puyallup
Resource Conservationist	Renton
Soil Conservationist	Clarkston
Soil Conservationist	Colfax
Soil Conservationist	Davenport
Soil Conservationist	Ephrata
Soil Conservationist	Ephrata
Soil Conservationist (Recent Graduate)	Ephrata
Soil Conservationist	Okanogan
Soil Conservationist	Pasco
Soil Conservationist	Port Angeles
Soil Conservationist (Recent Graduate)	Prosser
Soil Conservationist	Puyallup
Soil Conservationist	Puyallup
Soil Conservationist	Ritzville
Soil Conservationist	Spokane Valley

Hiring Actions in Process	Location
Soil Conservationist	Vancouver
Soil Conservationist	Waterville
Soil Conservationist (Recent Graduate)	Everson
Soil Conservation Technician	Davenport
Soil Conservation Technician	Colfax
Soil Conservation Technician	Montesano
Soil Conservation Technician	Republic
Soil Conservation Technician	Waterville
State Irrigation Engineer	Spokane SO
Resource Conservationist	Prosser
Soil Conservationist	Bremerton
Resource Conservationist	Longview
Biological Science Tech	Pullman PMC
Biological Science Tech	Pullman PMC
IRA Admin Prog Spec (HR Specialist)	Spokane SO
IRA Admin Prog Spec (HR Specialist)	Spokane SO
IRA Admin Prog Spec (HR Specialist)	Spokane SO
IRA Soil Conservationist	Ephrata
IRA Soil Conservationist	Ephrata
IRA Soil Conservationist	Prosser
IRA Agronomist	Waterville
IRA Soil Conservationist	Yakima
IRA Irrigation Lead (planner)	Yakima
IRA Central Area Outreach Specialist	Wenatchee
IRA East Area Outreach Specialist	Pasco
IRA Soil Conservationist	Colfax
IRA Soil Conservationist	Davenport
IRA Soil Conservation Technician	Pasco
IRA Soil Conservation Technician	Walla Walla
IRA Soil Conservationist	Pomeroy
IRA Soil Conservationist	Dayton
IRA Soil Conservation Technician	Everson
IRA Grants & Agreements	Spokane SO
IRA Programs Administrative Assistant	Wenatchee
IRA Programs Administrative Assistant	Olympia
IRA Programs Administrative Assistant	Spokane SO
IRA Programs Administrative Assistant	Spokane Valley





Programs



Program	Programs Allocation	Applications	Contracts	Obligation/ Awarded	Notes
CSP Renewal	\$3,750,000	61	20	\$3.6 million	Done obligating.
CSP Classic	\$12,000,000	186	7	\$700,000	Obligation deadline of Sept. 15.
CSP Sage Grouse	\$1,500,000	3	0	None	Returned funds to NHQ due to lack of participation.
EQIP Classic	\$26,306,400	814	207	\$14.9 million	Obligation deadline of Sept. 15.
EQIP CIC	\$842,400	32	6	\$600,000	Obligation deadline of Sept. 15.
ACEP-ALE	\$2,624,546	3			2 applications at Land Trust for signatures.
ACEP-WRE	\$463,838	3			2 applications canceled, 1 deferred to FY24.
RCPP-EQIP	NA	19			Partner responsibility to announce.
RCPP-CSP	NA	0	0	N/A	Partner responsibility to announce.
RCPP-LM	NA	17			Partner responsibility to announce.
RCPP-Easements	NA	4	3		Partner responsibility to announce.
FY23 RCPP proposals	NA	0			NHQ announcement deadline for submittal is August 18, 2023.
IRA-CSP	\$5,395,243	42	20	\$2.4 million	In process of contracting.
IRA-EQIP	\$4,207,419	58	24	\$1 million	In process of contracting.

Totals: \$57,089,846





Partnerships



Dave Rose, NRCS-WA West Area Conservationist, (18th from left), and Nick Vira, NRCS-Washington State Partnership Liaison (19th from left), represented NRCS at the first PSFLTF meeting May 4, 2023. (Courtesy photo.)

Federal Leaders Convene Puget Sound Leadership Task Force

Recently passed US legislation has mandated the formation of a Puget Sound Federal Leaders Task Force (PSFLTF). This task force is charged with coordinating, integrating, organizing a focused federal effort in the Puget Sound ecosystem to support implementation of the Puget Sound Action Agenda and protection of Tribal treaty rights. The new legislation was included in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2023, by Senator Patty Murray, Congressman Derek Kilmer, and Congresswoman Marilyn Strickland, and amended the Clean Water Act to create a Puget Sound Recovery National Program Office within the State of Washington and to codify this group that was initial stood up in 2007 under a memorandum of understanding.

Federal Agencies and Tribes of Western Washington met in May of 2023 to kick off the first official meeting for the PSFLTF, which was hosted by the Suquamish Tribe. Discussions were held among Tribal leaders, Federal Agency Leaders, Congressmen Kilmer, and State Agency representatives. State Agencies and Tribes are also included in a Puget Sound State

Advisory Committee, who will work with the PSFLTF; additionally the PSFLTF will collaborate with the Puget Sound Tribal Management Conference, who will provide advice and recommendations on actions.

Current Federal agencies in the PSFLTF include: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Army Corps of Engineers, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Navy, Coast Guard, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Geological Survey, National Parks Service, Federal Highways Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Additionally, the USDA's Farm Services Agency is seeking a designated representative for this effort.

The categories included under the PSFLTFs Action Plan include: Habitat, Stormwater, Shellfish, Science and Monitoring. NRCS is directly involved with Habitat functions, including Floodplains, Riparian and Estuaries; fish passage; and shellfish efforts.





Public Affairs

My team, down but not out

By Nate Gallahan

NRCS-WA State Public Affairs Specialist

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. – Wow! There has been and will continue to be, a lot of movement on my team! In the past month, one of my public affairs professionals and my administrative assistant are no longer on my team. Moving forward, I am looking to hire those two positions and then another public affair professional. So if you know of anyone interested in joining a fast-paced, strategically minded, communications and outreach team, please let me know!

By Fall 2023, I hope to lead a team comprised of a public affairs professional dedicated to external communications (traditional and social media), another dedicated to organizational communications (web, content development, newsletters), an administrative assistant (federal contractor), and an outreach coordinator (Kris Mills). Also, I'm currently in negotiations with three organizations in Washington to hire outreach coordinators who are both focused on outreach within their industries and to advocate for NRCS with all producers in their areas.

With this future team I sincerely hope we'll finally be able to push into proactive Communications and Outreach (C&O). We've been stuck in a reactive mode for years and it's been a real challenge. Moving forward, we need a robust team of C&O professionals to be able to build bridges across communities so everyone can equitably make best use of the incredible amount of funding made available through the Inflation Reduction Act.

So, while my team's current staffing situation is a bit challenged, the future is incredibly bright. I simply need to ask for a bit of patience as we navigate these turbulent waters this summer.

Engineering

IRA Climate Smart Practices

By Larry Johnson

NRCS-WA State Conservation Engineer

Anaerobic Digesters

The Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) has been allocated significant funding to construct anaerobic digesters. The Washington State Dairy Federation (WSDF) was instrumental in securing the funding through the state legislature.

Washington NRCS has been approached by the WSDF to determine how NRCS can provide financial assistance through the IRA program. Two coordination meetings have been hosted to-date to develop a strategy how best to access NRCS program through IRA and RCPP. NRCS follow up action include the following:

- Add conservation practices for FY 2024 that support anaerobic digester systems.
- Ensure the payment for anaerobic digester for FY 2024 is set to the maximum allowed payment for EQIP.
- Ensure payment scenarios are available for anaerobic digester systems.

Irrigation Practices

A recent visit by Terry Cosby, NRCS Chief, to the Columbia Basin Project (CBP) area generated much discussion about the need for irrigation practice funding assistance. After his visit, the Chief asked the NRCS Climate team to complete a site visit to the CBP area. The Climate Team plans to visit Washington State mid-July with the purpose of the visiting and evaluating the viability of irrigation practices as a Climate Smart mitigation activity.

In advance of the meeting, Washington NRCS has requested the addition of irrigation practices to the Climate Smart practice list for FY 2024. Irrigation practices are an important tool in reducing Green House Gas (GHG) and carbon sequestration. Additional information will be available after collaboration with the NRCS Climate Team.





NRCS News



Conservation Stewardship Program - Washington

CSP

Second application batching period now open for FY23 CSP

Applications due by July 23, 2023

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. (June 22, 2023) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Washington announced July 23, 2023, as the 2nd application batching period for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Classic and IRA for Fiscal Year 2023.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) 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. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help producers and landowners make conservation improvements on their land that benefit natural resources, build resiliency, and contribute to the nation's broader effort to combat the impacts of climate change.

Through CSP, agricultural producers and forest landowners 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 or forest production on their land. CSP also encourages the adoption of cutting-edge technologies and new management techniques such as irrigation monitoring,

precision agriculture applications, improved grazing systems, on-site carbon storage and planting for high carbon sequestration rate, and new soil amendments to improve water quality.

Although applications are accepted on a year-round basis, eligible applicants interested in the 2nd batching period for CSP Classic and CSP IRA must first submit their application and the below listed items to their local service center by July 23, 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 as described above.
- And then submit all of the following eligibility determinations to FSA by July 23, 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, visit www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov.





NRCS News

USDA Hiring Engineers, Natural Resource Specialists Nationwide to Strengthen Inflation Reduction Act Implementation, Enhance Agricultural Conservation

WASHINGTON, (June 23, 2023)

Today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced it is ramping up hiring for key positions that will help strengthen agricultural conservation efforts and turn President Biden's Investing in America agenda into action. The available positions include engineers, civil engineering technicians and natural resource specialists, building on other large-scale hiring announcements earlier this year. The application period for engineer positions is currently open, and engineering technicians and natural resource specialist opportunities will open over the next two weeks.

"Thanks to President Biden's Investing in America agenda, we are building a robust workforce with the skills necessary to support communities as they address conservation challenges and respond to increasing extreme weather events fueled by climate change," said NRCS Chief Terry Cosby. "If you are interested in leveraging your skill in engineering or the agricultural sciences to make a positive impact in your local community, you are exactly the kind of candidate we're looking for. You would work with farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners, as well as other community members, to address a variety of natural resource conservation challenges and support our country's investment in a

climate-smart future for agriculture."

Today's announcement is funded by \$19.5 billion from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act. The new NRCS engineers and engineering technicians will play a critical role in solving a host of natural resource problems for agricultural producers and local communities. Their projects may involve stream restoration, erosion control, developing water systems for livestock, improving and conserving irrigation water and restoring wetlands. They may also help communities recover from natural disasters.

Natural resource specialists perform a variety of duties to help landowners meet their conservation objectives. This may include assisting in the implementation of conservation plans, conducting scientific studies and performing on-site evaluations with customers. Their work enhances conservation program delivery and helps build resilient farms and communities across America.

"These positions offer outstanding benefits that set them apart from jobs outside of federal service," Cosby said. "NRCS provides competitive starting pay with regular increases and locality pay adjustments, career ladders and advancement opportunities, flexible work schedules and telework,

excellent medical benefits, paid maternal and paternal leave, and a pension where eligibility begins after five years of service, as well as a 401k-type retirement program with matching contributions by USDA."

How to Apply

The announcement for engineers is currently open on USAjobs.gov and will close on June 30, 2023. NRCS will post an announcement for engineering technicians on June 26 and natural resource specialists on July 3. Interested candidates can find more information and apply by searching for these job titles on USAjobs.gov.

To qualify for these positions, candidates must meet the education requirements, or a combination of education and experience requirements, as outlined in the job announcement. General qualifications for the engineering and natural resource management job series are also available on OPM.gov. Additional information on career opportunities at NRCS is available on the agency's careers web page.

More Information

Over the next several years, NRCS expects to add over 4,400 new employees to its federal workforce, in addition to over 3,000 team members through partner organizations, to help with Inflation Reduction Act implementation.





NRCS News

USDA to Invest \$3 Million to Support Cooperative Soil Science and Soil Survey Research

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans to invest \$3 million in partnerships to promote research that informs and improves soil surveys at the regional level, which is part of an ongoing effort to continue to provide critical data to the country.

WASHINGTON (June 8, 2023) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans to invest \$3 million in partnerships to promote research that informs and improves soil surveys at the regional level, which is part of an ongoing effort to continue to provide critical data to the country. Proposals from institutions of higher education in the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) network should be submitted to USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) by July 22, 2023.

“For more than 120 years, scientists have been conducting soil surveys, investigations and research,” NRCS Chief Terry Cosby said. “We are mandated to keep soil information relevant and available in useful forms to assist our customers—from community planners, to engineers, to farmers and ranchers—so they can make the most informed land use decisions. Collaboration is key as we continue to move the needle on advancing soil surveys.”

Each proposal must include significant collaboration with soil survey personnel, such as the NRCS National Soil Survey Center (NSSC) research staff or Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) soil survey or regional offices. The proposals' deliverables and their connection to soil surveys must be clearly explained.

These priorities were developed through iterative meetings and feedback gathered in conjunction with the 2022 regional conferences of the [National Cooperative Soil Survey](#) (NCSS). NRCS expects to select at least one proposal for funding from each of the four [NCSS regions](#) (North Central, Northeast, Southern and Western). The work should have regional application and fill gaps in soil survey knowledge and databases. Work could extend up to three years. Individual proposals must have a total cost between \$50,000 and \$500,000.

Within the NCSS region where the work occurs, proposal topics should:



- Address emerging issues such as urban soils, ecosystem services, wetlands/hydric soils, climate, wildfire and/or soil biodiversity and how those topics intersect with ecological sites and soil surveys.
- Enhance collaborative efforts between soil survey staff and cooperative research projects with emphasis on practical tools for MLRA staff and use of long-term monitoring and experiment locations.

More Information

Extra consideration will be given to proposals that include [Dynamic Soil Survey Research Support](#) (targeted towards close collaboration with NSSC researchers).

All proposals must include a data management plan and all data and deliverables must be made publicly available per [USDA regulations](#).

Additional information is available in the [notice of funding](#).



NRCS News

\$500 Million now available for Improved Regional Conservation Partnership Program

NRCS will accept applications now through Aug. 18, 2023

WASHINGTON, (May 19, 2023)

The Biden-Harris Administration today announced the availability of \$500 million in funding to advance partner-driven solutions to conservation on agricultural land through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). RCPP leverages a voluntary approach to conservation that expands the reach of conservation efforts and climate-smart agriculture through public-private partnerships. Increased funding for fiscal year 2023 is made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act, and this year's funding opportunity reflects a concerted effort to streamline and simplify the program. Program improvements will enable USDA to efficiently implement the \$4.95 billion in Inflation Reduction Act funding for the program while improving the experience for partners, agricultural producers, and employees.

RCPP Improvement Effort

The improvements included in this year's RCPP funding opportunity are part of an ongoing effort to streamline NRCS conservation programs and efficiently implement the Inflation Reduction Act. The RCPP improvement effort identified problems and central issues associated with the program and is working to develop meaningful

and actionable improvements.

Based on partner listening sessions and employee and partner surveys, NRCS identified seven key focus areas for improvement, each with a dedicated team working to address identified issues and provide recommendations:

1. Simplifying and Reducing the Number of Agreements
2. Reducing Lengthy RCPP Easement Transactions
3. Improving the RCPP Portal
4. Consistent Guidance and Training for Employees and Partners
5. Simplifying the Technical Assistance Structure
6. Improving the Conservation Desktop
7. Simplifying the Partner Reimbursement Process

Notice of Funding Opportunity

The application period is now open for RCPP Classic and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA). RCPP Classic projects are implemented using NRCS contracts and easements with producers, landowners and communities, in collaboration with project partners. Through RCPP AFA, the lead partner must work directly with agricultural producers to support the development of new conservation structures and approaches that

would not otherwise be available under RCPP Classic.

Today's RCPP Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) showcases a number of program improvements including the increase of project funding ceilings, the simplification of financial assistance and technical assistance structures, a stronger emphasis on locally led conservation, and easement deed flexibilities.

Up to \$500 million will be available through the RCPP for fiscal year 2023, of which up to \$50 million will prioritize AFAs with Indian Tribes.

Projects selected under this NOFO may be awarded funding through either the Inflation Reduction Act or Farm Bill 2018. Applications for RCPP climate-related projects will receive priority consideration for Inflation Reduction Act funding. The 2023 RCPP priorities are climate-smart agriculture, urban agriculture and projects and, as a Justice40 covered program, projects that serve underserved farmers and ranchers.

NRCS will accept applications now through Aug. 18, 2023 via the [RCPP portal](#). Please note that to request access to the portal, you must have a level 2 verified eAuthentication account with USDA. This can be obtained by following the instructions on the [USDA eAuthentication page](#).





NRCS News



USDA Seeks Members for Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

WASHINGTON, (May 15, 2023) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is seeking nominations for four positions on the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. Nominations will be open to public from May 15, 2023, to July 15, 2023. The 12-member Committee, which first convened in March 2022, is part of USDA's efforts to increase support for urban agriculture and innovative production. Members of the Committee provide input on policy development and help identify barriers to urban agriculture as USDA works to promote urban farming and the economic opportunities it provides in cities across the country.

"The Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Committee is an important opportunity for urban and innovative producers to have their voices heard and give direct feedback to USDA," said Terry Cosby, Chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, which oversees USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. "These new members will provide valuable input on how we can better serve urban agricultural producers with a focus on equity, local food systems, access to safe and nutritious food and new ways to address climate change."

Members of the Committee include agricultural producers and representatives from the areas of higher education or extension programs, non-profits, business and economic development, supply chains and financing. The Committee last met in April 2023.

Nominations

USDA is seeking nominations for individuals representing a broad spectrum of expertise. Four positions are open for nominations including:

- One individual representing urban agriculture.
- One individual representing an institution of higher education or extension program.
- One individual representing business and economic development, which may include a

business development entity, community

development initiatives, a chamber of commerce, a city government or a planning organization.

- One individual representing related experience in urban, indoor and other emerging agriculture production practices.

Individuals who wish to be considered for membership must submit a nomination package including the following:

- A completed background disclosure form ([Form AD-755](#)) signed by the nominee.
- A brief summary explaining the nominee's interest in one or more open vacancies including any unique qualifications that address the membership composition and criteria described above.
- A resume providing the nominee's background, experience, and educational qualifications.
- Recent publications by the nominee relative to extending support for urban agriculture or innovative production (optional).
- Letter(s) of endorsement (optional).

Nomination packages must be submitted by email to UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov or postmarked by July 15, 2023. If sending by mail, packages should be addressed to the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 4627-S, Washington, DC 20250. Any interested person or organization may nominate qualified individuals for membership, including self-nominations. For special accommodations, contact Markus Holliday at UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov.

[Additional details are available in the Federal Register notice.](#)





NRCS News

USDA Unveils Efforts to Streamline Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

WASHINGTON, (May 9, 2023) - The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is streamlining its Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) to ultimately better help agricultural producers and private landowners conserve wetlands, productive farmlands and at-risk grasslands. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is rolling out several improvements to this important program, which has more than 5 million acres of land enrolled, in response to feedback from producers, landowners and conservation partners.

Specifically, NRCS is updating its processes around appraisals, land surveys, as well as certifying eligible entities who help NRCS and producers enroll land into easements. These changes are for [ACEP Agricultural Land Easements](#) (ALE) as well as [Wetland Reserve Easements](#) (WRE).

"NRCS' changes to the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program will help us more efficiently and effectively work with producers and partners to protect lands in conservation easements," said NRCS Chief Terry Cosby. "We want our program to be more responsive to our customer needs so that ACEP

continues to be a valuable and effective conservation tool that provides long-term protection of our nation's farmland and wetland resources."

NRCS is streamlining ACEP appraisals, land surveys, as well as certifying eligible entities who help NRCS and producers enroll land into easements.

Key program changes include:

Appraisals for ALE: The threshold for national review of ALE appraisals is now \$3 million, raised from \$1 million. NRCS raised the threshold to align program requirements with increased land values, enabling the agency to better target staff resources and speed up implementation. Appraisals help ensure cost-effective and appropriate use of federal funds that are contributed to a conservation partner for their purchase of the ALE from the farmer or rancher.

Land Surveys for WRE: NRCS plans to encourage procurement of land surveys earlier in the acquisition timeline, such as when an application has been tentatively selected for a WRE. These surveys help with locating land boundaries, which is needed to purchase and manage the easement. NRCS is also increasing

its use of partnerships to assist with acquiring the land surveys and has simplified the review process for producer-acquired land surveys. This will speed up the time it takes producers and landowners to enroll.

Certification of Entities for ALE: For ALE, NRCS works with eligible entities, such as American Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations, to conserve prime farmland and at-risk grasslands. NRCS is working to expand the number of entities by launching a certification initiative to proactively notify potentially eligible entities that they qualify for administrative flexibilities. Certified entities have greater independence and less oversight in their purchase of easements funded under ALE. Information for entities on how to get certified is available on the [ALE web page](#).

These improvements are the first step in an ongoing effort to streamline ACEP as well as other NRCS conservation programs to ensure that they are easier and more convenient to utilize, and it will strengthen implementation of the [Inflation Reduction Act](#) (IRA), which included \$1.4 billion in additional funding for ACEP over five years.





Director's Bulletin

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

May/June 2023

From recovering species to providing habitat assistance to landowners, setting seasons, and checking licenses; there is no shortage of critical work being accomplished by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) employees every day. Our work contributes to a robust outdoor economy and to our way of life.

This spring, we celebrated staff and partners with our annual agency awards ceremony. We presented numerous awards, but I wanted to draw special attention to the following people and organizations that do so much for WDFW and the residents we serve.

Our employee of the year was awarded to **Bill Baker**, who serves as the District 1 Fish Biologist in Colville. He oversees and manages the district recreational fisheries on behalf of Washington's anglers and works toward the conservation of species. Bill has been a local foundational leader of a District 1 Culture Improvement Plan/Project that is intended to create a more positive and inclusive culture, improve morale, teamwork, and communication among and between District 1 staff, the Region, and Headquarters and identify actions that will assist local staff with relationships in the community.

Our manager of the year was awarded to **Rachel Blomker**. Rachel leads our Public Engagement Division and was recognized for her persistent positivity, grace, professionalism, and respect as she's led a new team to enhance our outreach and engagement with the public. She demonstrates an incredible work ethic and gladly helps everyone with any questions. Rachel also gets her 'boots on the ground' by attending many public outreach events. Rachel is knowledgeable in many areas and is even more inspiring in her desire to learn more; you can feel her enthusiasm and commitment to improvement every day.

The landowner of the year went to **HT Rea Farms** located in southeast Washington. They are a fourth-generation Walla Walla Valley family farm focused on sustainable production of numerous crops. HT Rea Farms are great stewards of the land and the environment using new technology such as modern spray applicators and GPS-guided equipment helping reduce overlap, which in turn saves fuel, chemical, and

staff hours, all to seek a balance between the environmental and economic risks associated with farming. HT Rea Farms have been working with WDFW since 2012, enrolled in Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements in working with the WDFW wildlife conflict staff and enrolling over 2,900 acres into WDFW's [Feel Free to Hunt and Hunt with Written Permission access programs](#). HT Rea Farms has also worked with staff in WDFW's Habitat Program constructing a new bridge over a creek to move equipment more efficiently and safely between fields and not to incur additional damage to rock beds and creekbanks. HT Rea Farms works with our private lands biologists to enhance existing habitat at various locations that they farm as well as planting new wildlife habitat shrub plantings.

WDFW's Volunteer of the Year award goes to **Mike and Trudy Barker** in Region 1. The Barkers have assisted WDFW in many capacities for several decades. Some of these efforts include assisting maintaining the [Fish Trap Lake access area](#), monitoring the lake, and reporting information to the Region 1 Fish Program, offering to operate net-pens to enhance the fishery at that lake, and assisting with rehabs when they occur.

WDFW's Organization of the Year was awarded to the **Washington State Trail Blazers**, a volunteer organization of about 75 people that contribute most of their time, energy, and knowledge helping WDFW maintain high lake fisheries. The Trail Blazers had their first meeting in December 1933, and for the past 90 years their members have participated in a variety of studies, wilderness protection activities, camp cleanups, stream restoration, beaver relocation, and trail maintenance. In 2022, dedicated individuals from the club made 141 trips into the wilderness, backpacking a total of 39,804 fish into lakes in the Cascades and Olympics.

Finally, I presented the Director's Award to **Ben Maletzke**. Ben has done an outstanding job balancing the day-to-day operations of all things wolf recovery over the last year. When I called Ben to let him know he was my choice for the Director's Award, he was in field collaring wolves. Ben and the team do an outstanding job conserving wolves and working to ensure that wolf recovery decisions are based on sound science.

I want to thank each of our 2,000 employees as well as all our [volunteers](#). I could not be prouder to serve as your director and to support you in being successful in your positions. Thank you for all that you do in conserving fish and wildlife in Washington!

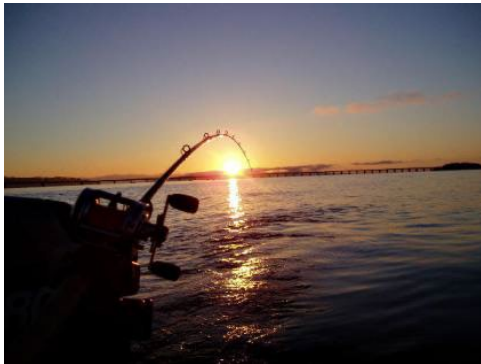


Sincerely,
Kelly Susewind, Director

Topics in this message include:

- [Plan your summer fishing trip: 2023-24 regulations now available](#)
- [Understanding conservation categories for Washington wildlife](#)
- [Wolf Periodic Status Review comment period](#)
- [New to hunting? Take a hunter education course this summer before the fall hunting seasons](#)
- [Clean, drain, and dry your vessel this boating season to prevent the spread of invasive species](#)
- [Outdoor education on public lands](#)
- [WDFW Trout Derby continues](#)
- [Duckabush Estuary habitat restoration moves forward with state funding, shifts in federal policy](#)
- [Check fire restrictions before your next outdoor adventure](#)
- [WDFW opens public feedback survey to begin three-year hunting season planning](#)

Plan your summer fishing trip: 2023-24 regulations now available



The Washington summer recreational salmon fishing season got off to a good start in several open marine areas of Puget Sound, [the coast](#), and Columbia River, with more saltwater and freshwater fisheries set to begin in July. Anglers can expect similar fishing seasons to last year, along with some good opportunities in Puget Sound for an expected pink salmon return of 3.9 million later this summer. You can find the full [2023-24 Sport Fishing Rules online](#), or pick up a physical copy at local outdoor retailers

and tackle shops. For the two-part salmon season planner blogs, visit [WDFW's Medium page](#). You can also learn more about the North of Falcon salmon season-setting process in this [blog post](#), and about how WDFW works to set conservation-minded salmon seasons every year in our video ["Sound Management: Conserving Pacific Northwest salmon through Cooperation"](#) on YouTube.

Understanding conservation categories for Washington wildlife



Threatened, endangered, sensitive, protected ... what does it all mean? [In a recent blog post](#), we discuss different listing statuses for species in Washington in need of dedicated conservation action. The state and federal listing status is just one of several conservation categories that a species in Washington can be included in. These categories often overlap, but each has its own unique definition and purpose. Different categories help spotlight conservation needs, spur protective action, and guide recovery efforts.

Wolf Periodic Status Review comment period



We released the [DRAFT Periodic Status Review](#) for the Gray Wolf on May 18. The public is invited to comment on the draft by submitting written comments at publicinput.com/psr-gray-wolf, emailing comments to psr-gray-wolf@PublicInput.com or by leaving a comment via voicemail message by calling 855-925-2801 and entering project code 2573. WDFW will accept comments until 11:59 p.m. on Aug. 16, 2023. Refer to the [news release](#) for additional information.

New to hunting? Take a hunter education course this summer before the fall hunting seasons



The Department offers fully in-person [hunter education courses](#) as well as hybrid courses that combine online and in-person learning. The traditional classroom course, which is typically taught over multiple evenings and includes a field portion, is highly recommended for students under the age of 12 and for those seeking a valuable classroom experience. The hybrid course combines successful completion of an online course followed

by a field skills evaluation where students receive hands-on training and evaluation by certified instructors. Learn more in our recent [news release](#).

Clean, drain, and dry your vessel this boating season to prevent the spread of invasive species



Boating season is officially underway in Washington! To keep lakes, rivers, and other water bodies clean and beautiful, WDFW is [asking the public to take a few simple steps](#) to help avoid the spread of invasive species. WDFW is the lead agency for statewide management of invasive species. Zebra and quagga mussels are two of the aquatic invasive species of greatest concern—they clog pipes and mechanical systems of industrial plants, dams, water systems, utilities, locks, and hatcheries. Dedicated teams of

WDFW [Aquatic Invasive Species](#) (AIS) unit staff test and monitor waterbodies around the state for these invaders each spring through fall. In other invasive species news, we released [an online map showing](#) areas where New Zealand mud snails have been detected in Washington, and [launched](#) our new [European Green Crab \(EGC\) Hub](#) and [May/June EGC Public Update](#).

Outdoor education on public lands



For the last three years, the North Central Educational Service District has worked with WDFW and a variety of community partners to bring youth from local schools to WDFW wildlife areas to explore how people can help wildlife and their habitats in the face of climate change. The STEAM in the Field Program (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) allows students to explore how wildlife area managers, volunteers, and community partners enhance habitats to support human recreation

wildlife habitat. This spring, middle school students investigated habitat on the Desert Unit of the Columbia Wildlife Area. Learn more about their experience in our blog, [Outdoor Education on Public Lands](#).

WDFW Trout Derby continues



The 2023 annual statewide [Trout Derby](#) continues through Oct. 31. This year's derby boasts 872 prizes valued at \$41,565, which equates to a whopping \$47.67 average prize value! As of June 22, 413 tagged fish have been caught and prizes redeemed through the prize portal. There are still over 420 prizes left to be claimed including a canoe donated by Filson. Recent cooler temperatures are helping keep lakes cooler as well, which translates to more lively trout action as we look toward July. Our series of email blasts to inform anglers about this

opportunity continues alongside this favorable weather. Learn more about fishing, hunting, and other outdoor opportunities at myWDFW.com.

Duckabush Estuary habitat restoration moves forward with state funding, shifts in federal policy



With Governor Inslee's signing of the Capital Budget this spring, a plan to elevate Highway 101 and restore the Duckabush Estuary's natural connection to nearby tidelands in Jefferson County is becoming more of a reality. Learn more [on our project webpage](#). WDFW received \$14 million in the recently signed budget. With a recent change in federal policy, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will now share the cost of highway construction with the

state, meaning the state's required contribution to the project may be half of what was originally anticipated. [Reference our blog post](#) for more information.

Check fire restrictions before your next outdoor adventure



Before heading out to enjoy public lands, be sure you are familiar with campfire and other restrictions. Dependent upon regional fire conditions, varying restrictions are in place to reduce the chance of wildfires on properties managed by WDFW. Campfire and other restrictions generally go into effect in late June or early July and include fireworks, target shooting in some areas, and parking on areas of dry grass. You can find

restrictions that are in effect at: wdfw.wa.gov/about/wdfw-lands/wildfire or more information and updates on Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR)'s webpage: dnr.wa.gov/Wildfires.

WDFW opens public feedback survey to begin three-year hunting season planning



We are beginning a three-year hunting season setting effort, and the [public is invited to provide feedback](#). Public comments will be used to inform changes to hunting seasons in 2024–2026. The public comment period began June 15 and ends July 2. Comments may be submitted online through WDFW's [public scoping survey](#), via [email](#), or via voicemail by calling 855-925-2801 and entering code 2576. Written comments may also be mailed to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife -

Wildlife Program, PO Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504. Three-year season setting is an in-depth rule making process that allows WDFW to propose and collect public feedback on changes to Washington hunting laws. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission sets hunting seasons based on public input and staff recommendations.

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

NACD Update

July 20, 2023 Commission Meeting

Washington State Conservation Commission

Upcoming NACD Events

- Joint [SW/Pacific Region Meeting](#), August 23-25, 2023. [Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel](#).
- 2023 [Summer Meeting](#), July 15-19, 2023. Bismarck, ND. Agenda [here](#). There will be discussion updating the regional strategic plan and also some fleshing out of ideas for an annual workplan.
- 2024 NACD Annual Meeting in San Diego – February 10-14, 2024.

Supreme Court Releases Opinion on WOTUS Definition

On May 25, the Supreme Court released an opinion in *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)* where they held that the “Clean Water Act’s use of “waters” in §1362(7) refers only to “geographic[al] features that are described in ordinary parlance as ‘streams, oceans, rivers, and lakes’” and to adjacent wetlands “indistinguishable” from those bodies of water due to a continuous surface connection”. This ruling will impact which wetlands are considered adjacent to waters of the United States (WOTUS) and therefore, whether those wetlands are under state or federal jurisdiction. More activity on this on [NACD's blog](#).

New and Changed NACD Staff

Bolor Amaranaa is the new director of Finance and Operations, out of DC. Her email is bolor-amarsanaa@nacdnet.org.

Candice Abinanti is the new NACD Director of Communications. Her email is candice-abinanti@nacdnet.org.

NACD Accepting Applications for Outreach and Technical Assistance Grants

The 2023 Request for Applications (RFA) for the **Outreach and Technical Assistance (TA) Grants Program** is available on the [2023 program webpage](#).

The Outreach and Technical Assistance Grant program is a partnership between NACD and NRCS. Our mutual goal is to achieve equitable outcomes for producers and communities while addressing conservation issues on private lands.

Applications must be [submitted online](#) by Sunday, August 6, 2023, at 11:59 p.m. ET. To learn more, visit NACD's [2023 Outreach and Technical Assistance webpage](#). For questions, please contact the NACD Conservation Programs team at conservationprograms@nacdnet.org.

[NACD 2022 Annual Report](#) - 35 pages highlighting the delivery of conservation from districts, associations, and others across the country.

Our CD's information at NACD - promote our district events on NACD's [Calendar of Events](#) Submit events [here](#).

NACD Pacific Region Leaders

If perchance you have a need contact information of NACD Pacific Region leadership (which includes NACD board, State Association Executive Directors, and leaders) and cannot easily find what you are looking for, please contact either [Tom Salzer](#) or [Doug Rushton](#).

Submitted by Doug Rushton, WACD national director, NACD board member.

Information current as of 7/6/23.

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