



# Legislative and Policy Update



Washington State  
**Conservation  
Commission**

Kate Delavan, Acting Policy Director  
March 21, 2024 Commission Meeting



# Agenda

- 2024 Legislative Session Recap
- Riparian Roundtable
- Tribal Engagement Policy
- Climate Resilience Strategy



# Legislative Session

- Budgets – Capital and Operating
- Request Legislation
- Initiatives
- Transitions



# Capital Budget

- **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Proviso Change**
  - Allow use of state funds to support landowners disenrolled by FSA
- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)**
  - No new funding, can meet need from prior appropriations
- **Sustainable Farms and Fields**
  - \$24.9 million moved from Operating to Capital







*Site Visit  
by Alexi Guddal, Whatcom CD*

# Operating Budget

- **Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)**
  - Requested \$10 million
  - Appropriated additional \$3.5 million
  - Total Biennium Funding \$4.5 million
- **SCC FTEs**
  - Requested \$600,000 - Appropriated \$200,000

## **District Direct Appropriation**

- Central and Eastern Klickitat CDs appropriated \$500,000 for post-wildfire recovery work
- **Organic and Climate-Smart Agriculture Study**
  - Deadline moved to May 1, 2025



# Request Legislation

- SB 5921, Concerning tribal representation on the state conservation commission
- **Sponsors:** Stanford, Van De Wege, Conway, Hasegawa, Liias, Nguyen, Nobles, Trudeau, Valdez
- Unanimously passed Senate
- Hearing in House Ag & Natural Resources Committee, no action in Executive Session



# Initiatives

- **Six initiatives submitted by public petitions**
- **Action on:**
  - Prohibiting state and local income tax
  - Codifying parental access to public school materials
  - Removing certain restrictions on police vehicular pursuits
- **No action:**
  - Repealing the Climate Commitment Act
  - Repealing the Capital Gains Tax
  - Allowing for opt-out of state's long-term care tax



*Smoky Bales  
by Mckenzi Coleman, Ferry CD*







# Climate Commitment Act - \$86 Million

- **Riparian Work**
  - 2023-2025 CREP (\$11 million)
  - Riparian Grant Program (\$25 million)
  - Salmon Riparian Funding (\$3 million)
  - Community Education Campaign (\$2 million)
- **Sustainable Agriculture**
  - Sustainable Farms and Fields (\$30 million)
  - Organic and Climate-Smart Agriculture Study (\$200,000)

*Spring in Central Washington  
by Ken Muir, Cascadia CD*




# CLIMATE COMMITMENT ACT FUNDING


TOTAL ALLOCATION \$86 MILLION

## WHAT'S THE PLAN?




**\$250,000**

Community engagement and outreach (most of it going to grants for conservation district work)




**\$30 MILLION**

Climate-smart agricultural practices through SCC's SFF grant program




**\$30 MILLION**

Toward grants and education to promote voluntary salmon habitat restoration



**\$15 MILLION**

Wildfire recovery work, addressing our state's unhealthy forests and reducing fuel in our forests



**\$200,000**

To study our state's organic and climate smart agriculture.

## What is funded in CCA?

### Riparian Work

- **2023-25 CREP (\$11 million)** to provide matching state funds for management and implementation to continue the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program with private landowners.
- **Riparian Restoration with Landowners (\$25 million)** to run a voluntary riparian grant program for riparian restoration and protection using the best available, locally applicable science. Develop and implement a framework that includes monitoring, adaptive management, and metrics.
- **Salmon Riparian Habitat Restoration (\$3 million)** to support the outreach, identification, and implementation of salmon riparian habitat restoration projects appropriated through the capital budget.
- **Education Communication Plan (\$2 million)** to develop and implement an educational communication plan for 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.

### Sustainable Agriculture

- **Sustainable Farms and Fields Grants (\$30 million)** to expand climate-smart livestock management practices including anaerobic digesters on dairy farms, increasing the SFF budget to provide more TA/FA to producers, and funding research and demonstration projects that focus on innovative and beneficial practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Organic and Climate Smart Agriculture (\$200,000)** to conduct an evaluation of the current contribution that organic and climate smart agriculture makes toward Washington's climate response goals, what potential there is for increasing this contribution, and how additional investments will help realize this potential, while supporting resiliency.

### Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resiliency

- **Address Unhealthy Forests (\$5 million)** SCC will work with conservation districts to address unhealthy forests and build greater community resiliency.
- **Reduce Forest Fuel Grants (\$10 million)** for SCC to provide grants to local government and private landowners for Firewise projects to reduce forest fuel loading in areas deemed a high hazard for wildfire.

### Planning

- **Community Engagement Plan (\$250,000)** for the completion of an agency community engagement plan and grants to districts for community engagement work on the ground.
- **Climate Response Strategy (\$23,000)** to cover staff time to represent SCC priorities in the statewide Integrated Climate Response Strategy.

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# Climate Commitment Act - \$86 Million

- **Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resiliency**
  - Address Unhealthy Forests (\$5 million)
  - Reduce Forest Fuels Grants (\$10 million)
- **Planning**
  - Community Engagement Plan (\$250,000)
  - Climate Response Strategy (\$23,000)

# Transitions

- Retirements
- Federal Elections
  - President
  - House seats
- State Elections
  - Governor
    - Staff
  - Commissioner of Public Lands
  - House & Senate
  - Party and key committee leadership







# Riparian Roundtable

- Recommendations on proposed changes in policy and spending priorities to improve riparian habitat and ensure salmon and steelhead recovery.
- SCC: Common ground solutions and elevating the importance of the voluntary approach.
- Next Roundtable Meeting: April (Wenatchee)

*Constructing Beaver Dam Analogs  
by Jacob Murray, Mason CD*



# Tribal Engagement Policy

- Building on discussion around Riparian Grant Program (RGP)
- Agency policy development



*Kettle River reflections  
by Bill Chamberlin, Ferry CD*





Post-fire recovery,  
Okanogan CD

# Climate Resilience Strategy

- **Legislature directed Ecology to convene interagency team of state agencies.**
- **Developed four agency actions:**
  - Science Coordination, Training, and Workforce Development for Conservation District Staff
  - Agricultural Viability and Farmland Preservation
  - Water and Natural Resources Resilience
  - Community Resilience to a Changing Climate
- **Climate Resiliency Priority Area of SCC strategic plan**



*Lazuli Bunting Singing  
by Casey Lowder, Pine Creek CD*

# Thank you!

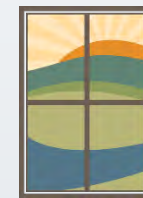
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**CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**  
OF WASHINGTON STATE

*your window to healthy lands*