



Washington State Conservation Commission

Special Meeting Packet

June 18, 2025

**This meeting will be held virtually via Zoom.
Options to participate in-person are available**

Lacey, Washington

Our Mission:

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

June 18, 2025

Special Meeting

Time

Please note that the times listed below are estimated and may vary, however, we will do our best to adhere to them. **Please visit the SCC website for the most up-to-date meeting information.**

Meeting Logistics

This meeting will be held online via Zoom and in person. Space is limited at the State Conservation Commission, if you plan on attending in person, please contact Lori Gonzalez at lgonzalez@scc.wa.gov by Monday, June 16, 2025.

If you plan on attending online, you will need to register in advance to receive a link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/9tJfmo9vWa6>. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with the link to join on June 18, 2025.

Public Comment

Public Comment will be allowed prior to final commissioner discussion. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.

Agenda

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
9:00 a.m.		Call to order/Welcome/Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roll Call• Pledge of Allegiance	<i>Chair Cochran</i>
9:05 a.m.		Public Comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.	
		a) Riparian Grant Program Guidelines – Action item	<i>Amy Martin</i>
10:30 a.m.		Public Comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.	
		b) Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual – Action item	<i>Sarah Groth</i>

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
11:00 a.m.		Public Comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.	
		c) Professional Engineering Grants Funding Allocation – Action item	<i>Shana Joy</i>
11:45 a.m.		Public Comment will occur prior to adopting each action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per comment.	
		d) Out of State Travel – Action item <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National Association of Conservation Districts Summer Meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Milwaukee, WI July 20-25, 2025 	<i>Director Thompson</i>
12:00 p.m.		Adjourn	<i>Chair Cochran</i>

Please note times are estimate and may vary.



Washington State Conservation Commission

June 18, 2025

TO: Conservation Commissioners
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Amy Martin, Riparian Grant Program (RGP) Manager

SUBJECT: Overview of Edits to the RGP 2025-2027 Guidelines and Approval Request to Adopt the Guidelines

Action Item

X

Informational Item

Executive Summary

The Riparian Grant Program (RGP) Manager, Amy Martin, will present an overview of the proposed 2025-2027 RGP Guidelines and revisions made in response to the comments received. SCC received comments from 21 individuals/organizations on several areas of the guidelines. This memo captures the primary updates to the guidelines since the draft was circulated for review during public comment.

Requested Action

Staff request approval from the Commissioners to adopt the 2025-2027 Riparian Grant Program Guidelines.

Background: Guidelines Comments

Comments were submitted from 21 individuals or organizations, each including references to various sections of the guidelines. Comments span a range of topics. The highest volume relates to tiered incentives, permanent protection, buffer standards, and clarity around specific project eligibility. Staff met regularly to review comments and their integration into the guidelines. Additional meetings were held between SCC and staff at the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and with the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission staff and Tribal representatives for further input and to contemplate next steps for the Riparian Grant Program in areas like permanent protection and Best Management Practice effectiveness monitoring. SCC also appreciates the ongoing collaboration with conservation district staff to improve the program.

Included with this Memo is a table of all written comments received and how they were addressed in the update to the guidelines.

Guidelines Updates

The updates to the guidelines intend to clarify frequently asked administrative and eligibility questions, strengthen references to salmon recovery as included in the proviso, and provide additional technical and planning references related to riparian function.

We appreciate the thoughtful engagement from many partners in this work. The following is a summary of the primary comment areas and edits to the guidelines:

Best Management Practices (BMP) & Buffer Width

- Refined the eligible application of Riparian Herbaceous Cover, Aquatic Organism Passage, and buffer width.
- Included reference to WDFW's Riparian Ecosystems publications and site-potential tree height (SPTH) as important planning considerations to optimize Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) restoration.

Permanent Protection

- Clarified that SCC RGP funding for acquisition will only contribute towards the value of the RMZ.
- Added a review and approval process for additional Lead Funders. The review process will ensure a Lead Funder is meeting eligible expense and administrative standards for state-funded projects.
- SCC will continue to explore important issues related to Tribal sovereignty in the administration of permanent protection.

Reporting & Metrics

- Added clarifying references about the data collected with each BMP, and standardized summary reporting metrics to align with the presentation agreed upon in coordination with other agencies.

Tiered Incentives

- SCC is drafting the engagement strategy for the update to the Tiered Incentives category of funding. This effort is coordinated with an active contract for an economic assessment of incentives framework. SCC will include Tribes, agencies, and conservation district partners in this work.

Included with this Memo is the updated draft of the 2025-2027 Riparian Grant Program Guidelines. Edits made since the March 20, 2025 draft are highlighted in yellow.

Conclusion

Following the June 18, 2025 presentation and discussion of the information captured herein, SCC staff will request approval to adopt the 2025-2027 Riparian Grant Program Guidelines.

For additional information, please contact:

- Amy Martin, RGP Manager, 564.669.0049, AMartin@scc.wa.gov

Riparian Grant Program Public Comments

Prepared for the June 18th Special Meeting of the Washington State Conservation Commission

Commenter Name	Comment	Response	Category A-Z
Alex Harwell - Cascadia Conservation District	4.3 page 18- the 50 ft buffer minimum is very limiting for some of our properties where the creek is wedged between a house and the existing road. Many of these sites a 50 ft buffer would severely limit access for the landowner to do anything else on their property. RGP was the one main state funded grant where the buffer at 35 ft or hedgerow practice we were able to provide a bit more flexibility with landowners where a 35 ft buffer is pushing it a bit but more reasonable for them to opt into a restoration project.	Buffer minimums for RGP are based on this program's focus to improve salmon habitat and water quality for salmon and align with NRCS standards. Exceptions are granted for tangible barriers to this requirement.	Best Management Practice
Ryan Williams - Cascadia Conservation District	We support increasing the eligible maintenance window to 10 years.	Thank you for your comment.	Best Management Practice
Zorah Oppenheimer - Clark Conservation District	Page 8 - Have the Salmon recovery regions identified with links on the grant webpage.	Thank you for your comment. We have added links to salmon recovery regions to the webpage.	Best Management Practice
Zorah Oppenheimer - Clark Conservation District	Page 18 - Even the Department of Ecology allows livestock grazing in the two zones of the RMZ furthest from the stream/creek. Would suggest defining what portion of the RMZ is not allowed to have grazing.	Thank you for your comment, no portion of the RMZ restored area is eligible for grazing.	Best Management Practice
Drew Schuldt - Palouse Conservation District	"Instream activities with no connection to riparian management zone restoration included in the same application will not be funded." This reads to me that i could not do instream activities on a project that has already had a buffer installed unless we're also actively working on the buffer on this grant as well, is that the case? We'll probably have projects where a funding source has had a buffer installed and we would like to do instream work now. Hopefully that makes sense? Also, if we were to do a DIP that included a riparian buffer and instream work, it would be nice to be able to do some of the instream work first, and then the buffer implementation. Is that possible?	Instream activities with no connection to critical riparian management zone restoration included in the same application will not be funded. Maintenance or additional restoration work would be expected for a project that required instream improvements.	Best Management Practice
Frank Corey - Whatcom Conservation District	4.6 - Suggest a broader interpretation of exceptions. It is not reasonable for example to expect a land manager with established perennial crops, access lanes, irrigation etc to remove this infrastructure but they very likely would agree to a buffer in whatever space is available. Suggest not referring to a buffer planting that is less than 50' as a RFB by exception but to use the Tree & Shrub Establishment practice to document areas planted with less than 50' of riparian for whatever reason. This is a very narrow interpretation of the Tree and Shrub practice standard. The standard is to establish trees and shrubs in many locations for many situations. Limiting the use of this practice to replanting/maintenance is not meeting the intent of the practice. Yes, use the practice to documents replants but also allow use for difficult	Thank you for your comment. To avoid duplicative acres reported across the program, new riparian restoration projects must use the Riparian Forest Buffer (RFB), Hedgerow, or Riparian Herbaceous Buffer (RHB) practices. Tree/shrub establishment has been designated for maintenance activities only. We look forward to working with partners on tiered incentive payment strategies that are adequate to address the management decisions on working lands.	Best Management Practice

Riparian Grant Program Public Comments

Commenter Name	Comment	Response	Category A-Z
	<p>situations where full RFB is not practical.</p> <p>The Tree and Shrub Establishment practice allows for use in many locations and situations, not just maintenance. The practice should be available for difficult situations where a RFB is not practical.</p>		
Linda Lyshall - Snohomish Conservation District	Maintenance, section 3.17, page 12: Snohomish CD strongly supports the 10-year eligible maintenance period. A 15-year maintenance period follows CREP contract options and would provide additional RMZ benefits, but 10 years is a substantial improvement in stewarding public dollar investments in riparian implementation.	Thank you for your comment.	Best Management Practice
Linda Lyshall - Snohomish Conservation District	Eligible Best Management Practices, Section 4, Page 18. SCD supports the changes to the eligible BMPs. The updates are aligned to NRCS practice standards and guidelines from other agencies. We value the input of the Tribes and want to prioritize aligning to their recommendations.	Thank you for your comment.	Best Management Practice
Linda Lyshall - Snohomish Conservation District	Sections 4.9 and 4.10, including Table 1, Pages 19-21: Snohomish CD supports the addition of Aquatic Organism Passage (Practice 396) and Stream Habitat Improvement (395) as “additional practices [that] may be considered on a case-by-case basis if they can be demonstrated to provide direct benefit to riparian management zone restoration.”	Thank you for your comment.	Best Management Practice
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	<p>Thank you for including language that recognizes the eligibility of projects upstream of current salmon presence where downstream benefits can be shown. In the Similkameen, Okanogan, and Methow subbasins, many riparian areas critical to water quality and hydrologic function lie outside of current salmonid-bearing reaches. In the Similkameen, upstream habitat is blocked by an impassable dam, but the water flowing downstream still carries the influence of riparian conditions upstream. In the Okanogan, steep tributary topography limits salmon access, but upstream restoration reduces sediment, cools flows, and improves downstream habitat. The Okanogan Watershed Plan notes that elevated mainstem temperatures and low flows impair salmon recovery, and identifies riparian vegetation as a key mitigation tool. Redd surveys have also shown increased spawning success near tributary confluences, reinforcing the ecological importance of upstream systems.</p> <p>Okanogan Conservation District works extensively with agricultural landowners in these areas, where salmon may not be present, but riparian restoration is urgently needed.</p>	Thank you for your comment.	Best Management Practice

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	<p>For many of these landowners, the RGP, and a few other WSCC programs, are among the only funding sources that align with both their land use needs and conservation goals. Department of Ecology's water quality grants require adherence to the Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture, a document that is both restrictive and poorly understood, resulting in land use limitations that many farms and ranches cannot accommodate. SRFB funding is limited to salmon-bearing streams, leaving much of our landscape without access to critical restoration resources.</p> <p>Without the flexibility built into the RGP to support upstream and non-salmonid reaches, conservation districts are left with few tools to help landowners voluntarily improve riparian health while continuing to manage productive lands. If the goal is watershed-scale function and meaningful salmon recovery, this program must remain a bridge between science-based restoration and the realities of rural land stewardship.</p> <p>Benefits like temperature buffering, flow regulation, and sediment reduction may be considered "indirect," but they are anything but secondary. In much of Eastern Washington, these functions are foundational to salmon recovery. We strongly support the inclusion of upstream eligibility language and urge that it remain broad and adaptable to local ecological and community contexts. By keeping upstream eligibility broad, the program supports the kind of upstream investments that make downstream salmon habitat possible.</p>		
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	We appreciate the WSCC and Riparian Grant Program Manager for keeping this program accessible, practical, and grounded in the realities of on-the-ground conservation, and we strongly urge that this context remain central as funding structures and policy priorities evolve around riparian restoration. Future versions of this program must continue to reflect the real-world conditions under which restoration happens or risk losing the very participation and impact it was created to achieve.	Thank you for your comment.	Best Management Practice
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	<p>Section 3.17</p> <p>We want to express strong support for the inclusion of a 10-year maintenance window for riparian projects. This is a critical improvement that reflects the ecological realities of restoration in Eastern Washington. Native plants often require extended establishment periods due to drought conditions, and low soil moisture. Furthermore, disturbances like wildfire, flood events, and invasive species outbreaks can occur years after initial installation, threatening otherwise successful projects.</p> <p>When challenges arise, it's often landowners who first notice and report changes on their project sites and they turn to Conservation Districts for help. The 10-year maintenance window recognizes that plant establishment is not always linear, especially in Eastern Washington's dynamic landscapes. It gives districts the ability to</p>	Thank you for your comment.	Best Management Practice

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Commenter Name	Comment	Response	Category A-Z
	<p>respond when setbacks occur, support landowners in addressing issues, and protect public investments by ensuring riparian buffers are given the time and care they need to succeed in providing water quality, habitat, and climate resilience benefits.</p> <p>We encourage WSCC to continue prioritizing flexible, long-term maintenance support for riparian projects, especially for those initially funded through other programs that may not have included sufficient follow-up care. Allowing support for older projects when there's clear need and a thoughtful plan, helps ensure past investments aren't lost and that established sites continue moving toward full ecological function.</p>		
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	<p>We urge WSCC to reconsider the blanket prohibition of all livestock access and grazing within riparian management zones. While the intent to protect riparian function is vital and supported, this inflexible stance limits the range of practical, ecologically sound tools that Conservation Districts can use to engage landowners, especially in working landscapes like those across Eastern Washington.</p> <p>Grazing, when done strategically, is a powerful tool. Flash grazing, rotational systems, and timing-specific access are rooted in sound range management and ecosystem health. In Eastern Washington's dryland systems, well-timed grazing can suppress invasive annuals and reduce wildfire risk through fine fuel management, tasks that would otherwise require extensive manual labor. These outcomes support riparian function and water quality, particularly when integrated with planting protection, off-stream water access, and responsible grazing plans.</p> <p>Refusing to acknowledge grazing as a valid ecological tool risks alienating the very landowners we need at the table. In many cases, strategic grazing is a doorway, a familiar, functional practice that builds trust, encourages stewardship, and creates momentum for broader restoration efforts.</p>	Thank you for your comment. Riparian vegetation takes a long time to establish and this draft of the Riparian Grant Program focuses on the first ten years of establishment. To achieve the purpose and intent of RGP and protect the public investment made in riparian restoration, riparian grazing will not be permitted within a restored RMZ.	Best Management Practice
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	<p>Section 4.8, Native Vegetation</p> <p>We appreciate the inclusion of climate-adapted species as allowable plantings under the Riparian Grant Program. While native vegetation remains the preferred standard, this flexibility acknowledges the real challenges we face in Eastern Washington with increasing drought stress, shifting precipitation patterns, and the need to adapt restoration efforts to future conditions. Allowing well-chosen, non-invasive species where appropriate gives districts the ability to design plant communities that can be practical, site-appropriate and that maintain ecological function and long-term resilience.</p>	Thank you for your comment.	Best Management Practice

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Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	<p>Section 7, paragraph 2</p> <p>The current language places full responsibility for identifying emergent issues on district staff, but in practice, monitoring is often a shared effort between districts and landowners. While many cost-share agreements include expectations for landowners to report site changes or problems, not all do, yet this kind of cooperation is essential to protecting restoration investments.</p> <p>Landowners are frequently the first to observe damage from wildlife, weather, or other disturbances. Their timely communication allows districts to respond quickly and effectively. Since district staff cannot be on site regularly, strong working relationships with engaged landowners are critical to a project's long-term success.</p> <p>We recommend updating the language to reflect this collaborative stewardship model. Acknowledging the role landowners play, formally or informally, not only reflects on-the-ground reality, but supports the trust-based approach that enables voluntary conservation to succeed.</p>	The structure of the annual site monitoring may be defined by the CD in the associated cost-share or District Implemented Project (DIP) agreements within RGP parameters.	Best Management Practice
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	<p>The guidelines provide a definition for "Critical Riparian Management Zone," but refer separately to "Riparian Management Zone" in multiple locations without defining it. Since the program distinguishes between critical and non-critical RMZs, for example, in maintenance eligibility and BMP implementation, this can create ambiguity.</p> <p>We recommend adding a formal definition of "Riparian Management Zone" to Section 8. This would help clarify project eligibility, especially in cases where work occurs outside of a designated "critical" zone but still within the broader riparian corridor.</p>	Thank you for your comment. References to "riparian management zone" have been replaced with "critical riparian management zone." More information on definitions related to riparian management zones is provided in the WDFW Riparian Ecosystems Volume 1 & 2 and in the definition of riparian ecosystem.	Best Management Practice
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	I think RCO would also fund stand thinning or conversion, but might be less relevant here since you don't fund out past 10 years.	Thank you for your comment. The present maintenance timeline for the program should not require a thinning practice.	Best Management Practice
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	The RMZ doesn't appear to have a full separate definition in line with WDFW, though it is shown in the diagram. Frankly, this Critical RMZ definition is a bit confusing. Wish it was just "RMZ that has been locally or regionally..." and RMZ was given it's full definition separately.	Thank you for your comment. Our primary reference to 'critical riparian management zone' as provided in the budget proviso is complemented with improved references to WDFW's definitions for riparian ecosystems and site-potential tree height RMZ.	Best Management Practice
David Giglio - Department of Ecology	Informing landowners of regulatory risks (section 3.2, page 8). Ecology supports the Commission promoting transparent conversations between CD staff and landowners/operators regarding regulatory risk. Ecology recommends that, in addition to informing program participants of the potential impacts of local land use codes, that CDs should be encouraged to share information about Washington's Water Pollution Control Act, and the potential regulatory risk of contributing pollution to state waters,	Thank you for your comment. The language in this section has been updated to: "Potential program participants (landowners/managers/lessees) should be informed that state, federal or local land use codes or regulations may apply which restrict the conversion of riparian buffer to other land uses	Best Management Practice

Riparian Grant Program Public Comments

Commenter Name	Comment	Response	Category A-Z
	as well as the recommended actions that will help to address and alleviate that risk (i.e. recommended actions provided in the Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture).	after the expiration of a project agreement or contract."	
David Giglio - Department of Ecology	Riparian restoration practices and minimums (section 4, pages 14-15). Ecology recommends that the program should not fund projects that only plant herbaceous vegetation in riparian areas. Ecology doesn't believe that funding herbaceous cover in the riparian area will achieve the goals of the budget proviso and support the Climate Commitment Act's goal of reducing our state's overall carbon footprint and creating a healthier climate. The current draft language suggests that herbaceous cover would be allowable throughout "dryland ecosystems," which are later (diagram on page 22) suggested to include areas in which the upland is characterized by sagebrush and bunchgrass. Ecology asks for clarification on what areas would be considered "dryland ecosystems" for the purpose of allowing riparian herbaceous cover to be implemented, as Ecology believes that many areas of the state that support sagebrush and/or bunchgrass uplands are areas where trees and shrubs are native riparian vegetation. Should riparian herbaceous be an allowable practice within the riparian zone, Ecology asks for a narrowing of that definition and making clear that if trees and/or woody vegetation (which capture and store carbon) can grow in the riparian area, it must be planted to be eligible for grant funds.	Herbaceous cover may be appropriate for some riparian management zones. This section has been clarified to: "4.5 - Riparian Herbaceous Cover practice, NRCS practice number 390, or Filter Strip, practice 393, may be used where easements prevent the establishment of woody vegetation or in areas where site conditions are not suitable for trees and shrubs to achieve the desired buffer width in the critical riparian management zone, such as native herbaceous dominated ecosystems. The minimum planning width for is 35 feet."	Best Management Practice
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	We support the proposed change to extend maintenance eligibility to 10 years. Maintenance is critical to long-term project success but has historically been underfunded. Shorter windows often leave restoration sites vulnerable before full ecological function is achieved, risking investment and habitat recovery. Expanding eligibility to 10 years better matches the realities of riparian restoration, especially in Eastern Washington, where establishing native vegetation and controlling invasive species often takes longer than five years. A 10-year window more accurately reflects the ecological timelines required for riparian restoration, allowing projects to achieve lasting outcomes and better steward the public investment.	Thank you for your comment.	Best Management Practice
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	We suggest adding biochar application as an eligible Best Management Practice (BMP) in Table 1. Biochar is already an NRCS-approved conservation practice that improves soil moisture retention, supports healthy root growth, and boosts plant survival, especially in drier areas where riparian restoration is more challenging. Including biochar would give landowners and districts another tool to help restoration projects succeed under tough conditions.	Thank you for your comment. Additional eligible practices may be proposed by conservation districts to meet their implementation goals.	Best Management Practice

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Commenter Name	Comment	Response	Category A-Z
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	Riparian Protection Standard	Thank you for your comment and engagement on this topic. The WDFW Riparian Ecosystem's Volume I communicates relevant science for incorporating biophysical, riparian function, and salmon habitat considerations into the work of riparian restoration. SCC has added the following language to the 4.3 Riparian Buffer Standards section:	Best Management Practice
	In our January 2024 letter, we requested the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) follow language in the proviso (ESSB 5200) calling for the Riparian Grant Program to adopt program criteria that will achieve "optimal restoration of functioning riparian ecosystems." Specifically, we requested WSCC recognize the 1 site potential tree height buffer as a scientifically supported approach to achieving that goal. The new guidelines make no reference to site potential tree height.	"Applicants are encouraged to consider the functions of the riparian management zone and plan projects to the width that will achieve the greatest riparian functional benefit possible. Consider the 200-year site-potential tree height (SPTH) for the location during project planning." We've also strengthened references to WDFW's definition of a riparian ecosystem and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Riparian Ecosystems Volume I: Science Synthesis and Management Implications (2020) in section 3.3 Project Types.	
	Instead, the guidelines continue to refer to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) best management practices, such as 50-foot buffers along fish bearing streams, as the basis for the Riparian Buffer Standard. The science presented in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Riparian Ecosystems Volume I: Science Synthesis and Management Implications (2020) clearly indicates this standard, along with several other NRCS practices cited in the draft guidelines, are inadequate to meeting both the goal of "optimal restoration of functioning riparian ecosystems in priority critical riparian management zones" and the proviso's language that the WSCC "consider the best available, locally applicable science that is specific to each region of the state where the program criteria will be applied."	The NRCS planning process is a useful training standard for conservation district staff, integrating upland and riparian resource concerns into conservation plans. The planning standards provide a useful framework to plan projects on diverse managed lands such as agricultural properties and emphasize a 'systems' approach to natural resource improvements. NRCS planning guidance instructs planners to conduct thorough natural resource assessments to inform their buffer widths and RMZ management. Conservation plans developed by CDs/NRCS address multiple ecosystem functions that affect salmon and riparian habitat – both in the riparian zone and in the uplands outside of the riparian zone. We encourage the use of biophysically based science (such as WDFW's Riparian Synthesis Vol. I) in our work as a critical element of the conservation approaches we	
	(119) - The proviso calls for grant funding to be informed by, consistent with, and aligned with at least one of a list of watershed and salmon recovery planning processes. The proposed guidelines recognize these recovery plans as the basis for prioritizing funding of projects yet include NRCS management practices as the basis for establishing a riparian protection standard. Along with being inconsistent with the intent and language of the proviso, inclusion of the NRCS management practices is inconsistent with this prioritization language. The NWIFC requests WSCC to remove specific reference to these management practices in the guidelines and instead refer to guidance provided in the proviso, WDFW's 2020 Riparian Ecosystems volume I, and where available, local watershed and salmon recovery plans to determine appropriate riparian protection standards that can be used to guide the funding of individual projects.		

Riparian Grant Program Public Comments

Commenter Name	Comment	Response	Category A-Z
		<p>employ. We are also tasked with integrating social and economic sciences into our approach to enhance the effectiveness of our work and to cultivate resilience within and across watersheds. We find that on-the-ground application of NRCS planning standards results in riparian buffers that exceed the NRCS minimum, resulting in improvements to the riparian zone and upland 'zone of influence' within WDFW's recommendation of site-potential tree height.</p> <p>As the riparian grant program is maturing, we see opportunities to clarify the upland riparian management zone considerations and BMPs more clearly in the RGP. Presently, CDs may propose additional eligible BMPs that are needed to maximize RMZ management, particularly where a practice other than riparian planting will achieve a restoration goal. We can also explore opportunities to demonstrate the application of NRCS planning process through the research conducted by SCC's Science Hub.</p>	
Zorah Oppenheimer - Clark Conservation District	4.6 page 19 - Will SCC provide specific criteria or additional guidance for consistently evaluating when buffer-width exceptions should apply, ensuring uniform application across districts?	Yes, the SCC will provide technical training and guidance to facilitate consistent project planning and implementation statewide while accounting for specific site conditions.	Buffer Width
Frank Corey - Whatcom Conservation District	4.3 - 50' of riparian forest along a stream results in huge positive improvements in the riparian zone. Larger minimum widths would adversely affect program participation.	Thank you for your comment.	Buffer Width
Frank Corey - Whatcom Conservation District	4.4 - The hedgerow practice has been very effective in establishing some buffer and shade along smaller watercourses where adjacent land use prevents larger buffers. Requiring 35'/50' minimum widths blurs the difference between hedgerow and riparian forest buffer. WDSA research demonstrates the amazing effectiveness of even a 15' hedgerow in intercepting pesticides and other contaminants before they reach the water. It is an important tool that is appealing to land managers in commercial agricultural settings where a buffer is most critical.	Thank you for your comment. The NRCS standard for riparian practices that will address an aquatic habitat resource concern is 50 feet.	Buffer Width

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David Giglio - Department of Ecology	Additionally, Ecology continues to request that minimum buffer widths are aligned with the minimums of the Clean Water Guidance. The buffer minimums of the CWG are designed to provide cool water, support healthy ecological function, promote resiliency from climate change and rising temperatures, and ensure clean water for Washington's residents today and into the future. Additionally, Ecology believes that the CWG provides more flexibility for landowners, as minimum widths are tailored to the stream size, and the various alternatives allow for different land uses, to provide landowners and operators with the ability to tailor their buffer implementation to match their needs for their land; supporting both clean water and agriculture. In support of promoting effective buffer minimums, Ecology also recommends removing the Hedgerow Planting Practice from the list of eligible practices.	Hedgerow is an effective option on working lands managing small waterways.	Buffer Width
Chris Conklin - WDFW	Eligible Best Management Practices: Section 4.3 describes the riparian buffer standards that applicants must meet. We appreciate that these standards strive to plant tall trees wherever feasible and legal. We recommend adding language to encourage applicants to go above and beyond the minimum buffer widths set by the Natural Resource Conservation Service. This language will strengthen the guidelines' support for restoring fully functioning RMZs. WDFW's online Site Potential Tree Height (SPTH) mapping tool and field protocol allows users to determine the recommended buffer width for achieving a fully functioning RMZ and would be a useful tool to assist applicants.	The following was added to section 4.3 Riparian Buffers: "Applicants are encouraged to consider the functions of the riparian management zone and plan projects to the width that will achieve the greatest riparian functional benefit possible. Consider the 200-year site-potential tree height for the location during project planning."	Buffer Width
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	We acknowledge and support WSCC's flexibility regarding minimum buffer widths. This flexibility—allowing exceptions where property lines, topography, hydrology, or cultural resource protections constrain full buffer application—reflects a thoughtful approach to the diverse conditions present across Reservation lands, traditional territories, and Okanogan County as a whole. This approach acknowledges the complex realities of Washington's landscapes and the need to adapt conservation practices to site-specific conditions. Maintaining this flexibility supports the health of critical riparian areas, which are essential to cultural continuity and ecosystem resilience.	Thank you for your comment.	Buffer Width
Jillian Hendrix - Snoqualmie Tribe	The Snoqualmie Indian Tribe considers cultural resources to extend beyond the scope of archaeology, and include the natural resources located within our ancestral territory. Therefore, activities that are non-soil disturbing may still have an impact on Tribal cultural resources. We kindly request Tribal consultation to still occur even for non-soil disturbing activities.	Thank you for your comment. SCC's Cultural Resource policy was developed in collaboration with the WA Dept of Historic and Archeological Preservation, which is the State's implementing agency for Executive Order 21-02 and is designed to ensure our compliance with that order. The policy focuses on activities that are soil-disturbing and those that are not. SCC appreciates the relationships built between Tribes and their local conservation districts to understand the	Cultural Resources

Riparian Grant Program Public Comments

Commenter Name	Comment	Response	Category A-Z
		importance of cultural resources to expand beyond this compliance-level policy.	
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	It is recommended that the granting program cautioned applicants in advance that restoration projects may cause adverse impact to archaeological sites and places used for religious or cultural practices. To disturb these places is against the law. Organizations and individuals may be required to have historic property surveys in advance.	Thank you for your comment. SCC encourages and supports the relationships between Tribes and conservation districts implementing this work. SCC's Cultural Resource policy was developed in collaboration with the WA Dept of Historic and Archeological Preservation, which is the State's implementing agency for Executive Order 21-02 and is designed to ensure our compliance with that order.	Cultural Resources
Joe Holtcamp - Skagit Conservation District	In the riparian grant program it says work must begin within 120 days of awarded funding, work can include planning, outreach, designs, etc. That may not always be the case. To submit an application you basically have to have the planning and design complete. What if I am awarded funding in August 2025 for a project and I am not planting it until March 2026?	Updated the language in Timelines 2.2 to: "Progress must begin on all funded proposals within 120 days of the award of funding, or provide a reason(s) or justification for delay." This aligns with the language in the SCC Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual.	Grant Administration
Ryan Williams - Cascadia Conservation District	The inclusion of federal lands in this list runs counter to the grant manual's assertion that Cost Share is not eligible on federal lands. Cost share is just one way to do projects with this program but it wouldn't be eligible according to the grants manual.	SCC agency policy allows up to 50% cost-share on federal lands according to the SCC Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedure Manual.	Grant Administration
Ryan Williams - Cascadia Conservation District	Will this section need to be updated once the final budget comes out? Can it be reworded to make it general enough and dependent on the budget itself? What if there is capital funding that allows for outreach work, would that need a full manual update?	Thank you for your comment. Added clarification to this section: "The SCC may award capital funds for outreach activities in accordance with the RGP proviso for capital funding." (3.8)	Grant Administration
Ryan Williams - Cascadia Conservation District	Repeating my comment from above. The grants manual provides guidance that cost share is not eligible on federal lands.	Cost-share assistance is eligible on Federal lands, in accordance with policies and maximums outlined in the SCC Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedure Manual.	Grant Administration
Zorah Oppenheimer - Clark Conservation District	Page 12 - Can maintenance funds be applied for in the same biennium that a project that was implemented? For example, if a planting is done say Spring 26, can maintenance funds be requested for watering for the summer of 26?	Yes, implementation and maintenance for the new restoration site can be applied for in the same application.	Grant Administration

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Zorah Oppenheimer - Clark Conservation District	Page 18 - Can we request funding for scoping to prepare designs? One of the benefits of WSCC funds is that we can actually fund the initial work before full scale plans are drawn up. Hopefully that isn't shifting. "If the project involves engineered rock or large wood placement, engineered design plans must be submitted with the application and will be used to evaluate the project's readiness to proceed with funding."	Yes, designs are eligible in the TA/Planning category of funding. Instream Activities section is updated to clarify that designs are required with cost-share or DIP projects.	Grant Administration
Ryan Williams - Cascadia Conservation District	We recommend that there be some manner of cap with instream activities. They can be very expensive to implement relative to the buffer benefit. I support a case by case consideration of projects because it may be the final piece to move a project forward.	Thank you for your comment. At this time, there is no funding cap on instream activities. This policy may be reviewed over the course of the biennium if funds become limited.	Grant Administration
Linda Lyshall - Snohomish Conservation District	General Requirements - Timelines, section 2.3, Page 4: Snohomish Conservation District (SCD) strongly supports this addition as it provides certainty to Districts and landowners interested in participating in the program about continued maintenance and technical assistance for implemented projects.	Thank you for your comment.	Grant Administration
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	Section 3.10.1 The phrase "project development equipment" may inadvertently exclude essential equipment used for monitoring post-installation site conditions. Clarification is needed around the eligibility of equipment that supports project monitoring after implementation. For example, tools such as soil moisture sensors, water quality meters, or GPS-enabled data collectors are often integral to ongoing adaptive management and program accountability. These tools may not directly contribute to initial "project development," but they are essential for tracking project effectiveness and informing future site management.	The guidelines have been updated with the following clarification on monitoring equipment: "Monitoring equipment is limited to tools necessary to monitor and adaptively manage the restoration activities."	Grant Administration
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	Section 7, paragraph 4 We recommend clarifying that SCC staff will coordinate directly with conservation districts when conducting five-year technical reviews. These reviews do not need to duplicate monitoring or outreach activities that districts may already be performing. Without coordination, these visits risk not only straining limited staff capacity but also misusing taxpayer dollars on redundant work. To ensure efficiency and accountability, we encourage SCC staff to group site visits when possible and align them with scheduled tours, maintenance checks, or other field activities already on the calendar.	SCC coordinates all on-site project reviews/visits with CD staff ahead of time.	Grant Administration
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	Are you changing who is going to be reviewing projects given project prioritization and additional guidance re: salmon recovery benefits? Are there ways we can help support that technical review given RCO's experience?	We appreciate RCO's interest in supporting our program and the partnership as we have adaptively managed this work. At present, SCC will maintain internal review of RGP projects.	Grant Administration
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	RCO also asks people to demonstrate why conditions/constraints don't allow for a planting-only proposal. Would encourage mirroring that language more if possible (RCO Manual 18 Page 136-137).	The guidelines have been updated with language similar to RCO's manual. This will aid documentation of on-the-ground planning decisions.	Grant Administration

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Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	Just a note that RCO will not fund this with riparian dollars, and our board probably wouldn't support due to costs and intent of the funding. I'd be curious to hear the conversation behind adding this in.	Improving fish passage, when paired with riparian restoration, contributes to restoring riparian function.	Grant Administration
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	I'd think you'd also want to have engineering designs in hand for some of these, so you can assess readiness to proceed?	We have clarified which practices require engineering in the guidelines and the application requirements.	Grant Administration
Alice Rubin - Recreation and Conservation Office	Require match for work on federal property. The state's funds should not be used to support the necessary upkeep of federal lands that should be the responsibility to be funded by the federal government. Federal agencies should have to clear a higher bar to be eligible for the program.	Thank you for your comment. Cost-share policy for publicly owned land is set in SCC's Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedure Manual at 50% with the option of requesting exceptions.	Grant Administration
Alice Rubin - Recreation and Conservation Office	Reduce the eligible cost share incentive for federal lands. Federal land-owning agencies have their own resources to maintain their properties and state resources should be limited for what should be their own maintenance obligations.	Thank you for your comment. Cost-share policy for publicly owned land is set in SCC's Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedure Manual at 50% with the option of requesting exceptions.	Grant Administration
Sasha Medlen - Individual	Commenting as a private citizen, but due to experience as a grant manager at RCO. Feedback I get from CDs is that it is really difficult to get plants established in the 2 year WSCC grant cycle. Projects need at least 4-5 years to establish plants by coming back, treating for invasives, and replanting trees that may have died.	The SCC is pursuing the option of grant awards that span multiple biennium. CDs may apply for maintenance funds for up to ten years in subsequent biennium.	Grant Administration
Zorah Oppenheimer - Clark Conservation District	Page 23 - Could SCC provide standardized monitoring metrics or a reporting template districts can use annually to streamline and align reporting efforts?	The reporting form is available on the Riparian Grant Program webpage. SCC is drafting tools to support annual monitoring of projects.	Metrics & Reporting
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	Section 7, paragraph 3 Mandating a single SCC-developed worksheet for annual monitoring undermines the flexibility Conservation Districts need to collect relevant, actionable data. One-size-fits-all monitoring does not work across Washington's diverse riparian systems. Data points that are meaningful in saturated, western lowland systems may not apply or may miss key indicators entirely in Eastern Washington's intermittent streams and drought-prone riparian areas. District staff shouldn't be forced to spend time collecting data that doesn't inform adaptive management or reflect site conditions. Worse, a rigid approach could obscure real restoration outcomes by failing to capture what actually matters on the ground. We recommend SCC reframe the worksheet as an optional tool or template, not a required format. Districts must retain authority to develop site-specific monitoring protocols that reflect their landscape, project design, and local capacity. If the goal is	Annual site monitoring is essential to establishing successful riparian restoration projects. SCC needs to collect consistent data across projects statewide to evaluate program effectiveness and for this purpose, a form will be provided. CDs are not prevented from carrying out further data collection or monitoring to inform local adaptive management.	Metrics & Reporting

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	program accountability, then let the data reflect what's real, not just what fits neatly in a form.		
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	Any way we can get closer to a common suite of foundational metrics? RCO has, and Riparian roundtable recommends, "miles of streambank planted" and "average riparian width" in addition to what is shown here.	We have added a reference on the webpage that lists the metrics collected with each practice installed. In section 2.11 Reporting we have clarified that those metrics will be used to report in a format consistent with the recommendations from the Riparian Roundtable and our partners.	Metrics & Reporting
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	Yes, would be good to know what other sources of funding, including SRFB, are going towards the scope of work.	Thank you for your comment.	Metrics & Reporting
David Giglio - Department of Ecology	Reporting metrics (section 2.11, page 5). Ecology appreciates that the draft updated guidelines include language that describes more specific reporting requirements, as transparent reporting of implementation information has utility beyond the evaluation of a single program's success. Implementation information, especially when publicly available, provides other entities working in an area the ability to track progress and identify where additional effort and resources would best be allocated. Ecology recommends reporting metrics to include the width of new riparian buffers planted, to increase the ability to assess the successes of the riparian grant program. Additionally, Ecology looks forward to future collaboration as, per the proviso language, the Commission works to establish "...a data management system that allows for coordination between the commission and other state agencies."	SCC collects multiple metrics associated with each best management practice installed, including buffer width. We have linked to a sheet that lists the metrics associated with each BMP for clarity.	Metrics & Reporting
Ryan Williams - Cascadia Conservation District	Paragraph 3.7 has an awkward sentence: "... alignment with local planning priorities. The primary content of the materials must relate to riparian management or program." Is it supposed to be "or riparian grant program"?	This sentence has been corrected.	Other

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Zorah Oppenheimer - Clark Conservation District	Note, the guidelines in the March Commission packet online and those in the Formstack are different. Largely, the inclusion of permanent protection in the updated guidelines.	Thank you for your comment. Permanent protection guidelines were shared with Commissioners after distributing the original meeting packet, however, links used to distribute the guidelines were updated on March 20, 2025.	Other
Zorah Oppenheimer - Clark Conservation District	- I think the numbering scheme got messed up here with "Application" (or else just above in Timeline). - Not necessary to be included in the guidelines, but regular (monthly or every two months) email notifications through GovDelivery or the WSCC roundtables on available funds would be appreciated.	Thank you for your comment.	Other
Zorah Oppenheimer - Clark Conservation District	Page 24 - Put in alphabetical order. Also see comment under 4.2 re: livestock grazing being excluded from full RMZ.	Thank you for your comment. The list has been alphabetized.	Other
Mike Nordin - Pacific Conservation District	2. Strong opposition to RGP state funds allocated to RCO -All RGP fund allocations should be placed solely with the SCC. CD's statewide specialize in RGP projects. RCO does not specialize in RGP activities nor are equipped for allocating properly processed projects. RCO is recreating the wheel, so to speak, and is not doing a very good job, at least in PCD's opinion. In addition, RCO salmon activities do not cover all of Washington state and its watersheds, but SCC does. The cooling and nutrient needs of the stream should be addressed in even none salmon bearing streams statewide. RCO/SRFB do not cover the whole state via WRIA salmon recovery areas. RCO/SRFB's proposal is to allocate via lump sums to WRIA groups at percentages already deemed by salmon recovery area allocations. Keep the funding where the correct apparatus already exists and functions at a high level.	Thank you for your comment. Funds allocated to SCC by the legislature remain wholly within the Riparian Grant Program. Conservation districts may use funds to match acquisition programs funded by RCO.	Other

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David Giglio - Department of Ecology	<p>(1of2) - Through Climate Commitment Act funding and this program, the state has an extraordinary opportunity to significantly increase the pace of riparian restoration in Washington. Restoration of riparian habitat is needed for salmon survival and population recovery, as well as for our federal obligation to meet water quality standards. The WSCC Riparian Grant Program is an excellent opportunity for our agencies to collaborate in meaningful ways that lead to durable solutions to challenging ecosystem recovery goals for the people of Washington. It is important to be innovative and collaborative in providing consistent financial assistance programs to the agriculture community and other landowners that incentivize the riparian buffers that are supported by best-available science and designed to be climate resilient. This is especially true given the current budget climate.</p> <p>As Ecology communicated last year in our comment letter on the interim Riparian Grant Program Guidelines, we value the State Conservation Commission's (SCC) role to implement voluntary, incentive-based programs. We also appreciate the huge undertaking it took to stand up a new riparian restoration grant program. As one of the state agencies the proviso requires the SCC to coordinate with when adopting program criteria, Ecology continues to be dedicated to providing feedback to the SCC on how we can better align our grant programs and ensure our grant guidelines make sound environmental investments. This is a significant opportunity for our agencies to demonstrate that collaborative leadership will result in more durable approaches to riparian restoration for the state. As the SCC moves forward with adopting additional criteria related to tiered incentives, Ecology is prepared to participate in any processes or groups that the SCC forms.</p> <p>The new updates included several changes that Ecology supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added language recognizing improving water quality is one of the purposes of the program. • Reporting metrics: Ecology supports the inclusion of more specific reporting requirements. • Maintaining eligibility for projects that result in permanent protection. In a preview draft of the grant guidelines update the section on permeant protection was removed. Ecology is happy to see that you reinserted that section and encourage you to keep it in the funding guidelines. • Updates to the Maintenance Section: Ecology recognizes the importance of maintenance projects and support its inclusion as an eligible project under this program. The additions of reporting metrics and reference to cultural resources review process are good improvements to this section. • Instream Activities: Ecology supports the new requirement for engineered design 	<p>We appreciate the support from our partner agencies and are committed to developing a program that is complementary to grant programs managed by other state agencies.</p>	Other

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	<p>plans for projects that involve engineered rock or large wood placement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Livestock BMPs: Ecology supports eligibility for exclusion fence and other supporting BMPs. Ecology supports the clear statement that “For all projects funded under this program, livestock access and/or grazing of the riparian management zone (RMZ) is not allowed.”• Native Vegetation: Ecology supports the reference to the Washington Native Plant Society Native Plant Directory.		

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David Giglio - Department of Ecology	(2of2) - The SCC is a leader in voluntary conservation and critical to achieving our long-term goals for riparian restoration in Washington State. The SCC and conservation districts are vital to achieving riparian restoration at the scale which is necessary to meet our state and federal commitments. Meaningful collaboration across state natural resource agencies will establish riparian restoration programs that provide a consistent message to landowners and reduce confusion around regulatory expectations. Additionally, better alignment of funding requirements should lead to efficiencies for agencies and project sponsors, allowing us to more easily combine grant funds, speed up the review of projects already deemed eligible under one program, and to leverage all available state dollars. There is a real opportunity here for the state to converge around grant program requirements, learn from successful approaches, and adapt our funding programs to achieve what we all want, functional riparian areas that support our recovery goals.	We appreciate the support from our partner agencies and are committed to developing a program that is complementary to grant programs managed by other state agencies.	Other
	The aim of our feedback continues to be underscoring the importance of incentivizing buffers that will truly protect water quality, be climate resilient and address salmon habitat needs. Ecology is also advocating for all natural resource agencies within Washington to promote similar, science-based practices that will sufficiently address these resource concerns. It's important that all state voluntary and grant programs support protective minimums and align with the state's nonpoint program to provide more significant incentives for wider buffers.		
	Attached are additional comments on the updates. Ecology hopes the SCC will consider them as well as our original comments and adjust the program to ensure we use this historic funding to meet our salmon, water quality and climate resiliency goals. This is an excellent opportunity for our two agencies to collaborate and come together. Thank you in advance for your consideration.		
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	Dear Mr. Thompson: I'm glad you could join our coalition last month for our Puget Sound Day on the Hill event. We have many challenges ahead of us in our salmon recovery effort, but it was good to collaborate with you on this trip. While this letter is on a more specific subject matter, I wanted to acknowledge the partnership that we have with so many from various sectors in our state. On behalf of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC), I'm writing to highlight some of the comments we previously provided on the proposed Riparian Grant Program guidelines. We provided those first set of comments on the interim guidelines in a letter dated January 17, 2024 (attached). While the NWIFC see these updated guidelines as a clear improvement over the interim guidelines, there are still several important issues of concern that have not been addressed and are being reiterated	Thank you for your comment.	Other

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	<p>through this letter.</p> <p>Stopping and reversing riparian habitat degradation remains a priority to the 20 treaty tribes in western Washington. We continue to look for ways to apply science to protect and restore treaty-protected salmon populations while increasing ecosystem health and climate resiliency in our watersheds. The NWIFC views the Riparian Grant Program as an opportunity to further these goals across the region. We fully support the intent of the program to “achieve riparian management zone (RMZ) restoration and protection in Washington state at a pace and scale not previously possible.” Our comments are presented with that goal in mind and focus specifically on three areas – the Riparian Protection Standard, guidance on Permanent Protection, and Tribal Engagement in this process.</p>		
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	<p>To conclude, we propose scheduling a meeting between tribal and WSCC leadership before the guidelines are finalized to discuss tribal input and suggestions. The NWIFC believes there is an opportunity after the guidelines are finalized for the WSCC and conservation districts to begin working with local tribes to coordinate Monitoring and Adaptive Management efforts associated with Riparian Grant Program projects, especially in the context of ensuring that watershed and salmon recovery plans are implemented effectively and are achieving their intended outcomes.</p>	<p>Thank you for coordinating a meeting with SCC on June 3rd. We appreciate the continued engagement from NWIFC and Tribes in this work. The SCC sees there are opportunities in the growth of this program to work with partners in the monitoring and adaptive management of this program and its outcomes towards watershed and salmon recovery plans. We look forward to collaborating with Tribes as we explore BMP effectiveness and regional impacts of SCC programs.</p>	Other
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	<p>Section 3.7 Excluding youth-focused outreach is short-sighted and counterproductive. Youth are the next generation of land stewards, and early exposure to riparian systems is essential to ensuring these habitats remain functional, resilient, and respected as they become landowners themselves. Whether identifying plants, testing water quality, or using a stream table in the classroom, these activities give youth a clear, physical understanding of how riparian systems work. Movement and hands-on learning make it easier to retain information and see its relevance on the ground. When young people understand how a system functions, they’re more likely to recognize their role in it and to take responsibility for its care later on.</p> <p>While Conservation Districts aren’t the only providers of outdoor education, many, including ours, bridge critical gaps where schools lack capacity. In 2024, Okanogan Conservation District reached 3,336 students across nine school districts with conservation education. As the largest county in Washington by land area, our region faces unique challenges: long travel distances, limited school budgets, and a shortage of environmental education programs. Despite those hurdles, demand from teachers and enthusiasm from students continues to grow, a sign that youth are eager to engage</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. The exclusion of youth-focused education reflects the direction from the legislature to use funds for geographically targeted outreach activities that will generate projects that benefit salmon recovery. SCC believes that youth education is very important; however, the intent of this funding is to accomplish more riparian restoration and protection projects and any outreach activities must be geared directly to that end.</p>	Outreach

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	<p>directly with the land and learn how to care for it.</p> <p>The current guidelines also conflict with the Climate Commitment Act's intent to deliver meaningful, equitable benefits, especially in rural and overburdened communities, where school budgets are stretched, and federal Environmental Education funding is limited and highly competitive. By restricting youth-focused outreach, the program excludes a proven, community-rooted method of fostering environmental literacy and long-term participation in conservation.</p>		
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	<p>It is also inconsistent to allow youth volunteers under District Implemented Projects while disallowing the outreach and coordination necessary to involve them. This creates a structural barrier to community engagement and undermines efforts to build future capacity for riparian restoration.</p> <p>If youth outreach cannot be supported through this program, the Washington State Conservation Commission is strongly urged to create or identify a complementary funding path. Conservation Districts are already growing the next generation of stewards and our funding systems should recognize and support that contribution.</p>	Thank you for your comment. Volunteer coordination, including youth volunteers, for project implementation is an eligible activity.	Outreach
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	<p>We suggest expanding the prioritization criteria to better recognize the role of outreach and capacity-building projects. As currently written, the guidelines state: "All projects must lead to improved functions within a critical riparian management zone (RMZ)." We recommend a slight revision to also value outreach efforts that build the long-term capacity of landowners and community members to improve RMZ functions, even if direct support for outreach activities is limited under current funding structures. It is imperative that all projects lead to improved functions within a critical riparian management zone (RMZ) or aim to increase capacity for landowners and community members to improve RMZ functions.</p> <p>Recognizing outreach and education alongside direct on-the-groundwork could support long-term stewardship goals, build conservation readiness among communities, and ultimately strengthen the impact of future implementation projects.</p>	Thank you for your comment. Outreach is an important component of the Riparian Grant Program framework. The direction from our budget proviso language is to "support the outreach, identification, and implementation of salmon riparian habitat restoration projects that are appropriated through the capital budget". Conservation districts may submit outreach projects that engage landowners to understand RMZ functions.	Outreach
Mark Ingram - Cascadia Conservation District	<p>In our region of the Upper Columbia, our lead public agencies funding protection and acquisition are the Public Utility Districts, in particular, Chelan, Douglas, and Grant PUD Commissions for habitat recovery. We are in active stages of acquisition of an entire mile of stream that has an average of over 30 adult returning steelhead per year, that needs protection and restoration (currently privately held and the family are willing landowners to sell for conservation), yet our lead funding agency is the Grant County PUD, Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee (PRCC). The County PUD agencies are not listed as eligible "Lead Funders." The other lead funder of protection/acquisition projects is the Chelan County PUD Tributary Committee (TRIB Committee). Please</p>	An opportunity has been added for applicants to propose additional Lead Funder programs for SCC review and approval.	Permanent Protection

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	ensure the Public Utility District of the Columbia Basin are included as lead funding agencies for protection projects so that we can move these projects forward!		
Ryan Williams - Cascadia Conservation District	<p>Page 14, Paragraph 3. Bulleted with number 2. The list of lead funders is too narrow. There are several entities that might fund acquisitions that are not listed. They include funding provided by entities such as the Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee, BPA, Wells Dam Habitat Conservation Plan Tributary Committee and many others. Please consider increasing the number of eligible primary funders, or allow for a case-by-case consideration rather than prescribed funding sources.</p> <p>Method of payment is lacking any information, please strike it out or add information</p>	An opportunity has been added for applicants to propose additional Lead Funder programs for SCC review and approval.	Permanent Protection
Zorah Oppenheimer - Clark Conservation District	<p>Page 13 - Remove the specific list of lead funder programs entirely. Even with the sentence, "Projects may include funding from a source not included in the list of Lead Funders, as long as an approved Lead Funder is funding a portion of the acquisition and will retain an interest (hold, co-hold, or third-party beneficiary) in the final recorded instrument." This is still too restrictive. Keep it to the definition in RCW 64.04.130. What if we have matching funds from an unlisted agency, land trust, or even a non-profit or private donor?</p>	An opportunity has been added for applicants to propose additional Lead Funder programs for SCC review and approval. SCC will review and accept Lead Funders that demonstrate administrative and due diligence requirements described in the guidelines.	Permanent Protection
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	<p>We support the need for flexibility in how permanent protection mechanisms are implemented across diverse land ownerships and stewardship frameworks. While we defer to Tribes to speak directly to the intersection of conservation easements and Tribal sovereignty, we encourage WSCC to ensure the program does not unintentionally exclude Tribal or community-led projects due to overly rigid structures around co-holding or easement terms.</p> <p>There is value in providing options that can work with different models of land care and protection, including Tribal stewardship, land trust partnerships, and locally driven agreements. The program should remain adaptable enough to support meaningful, durable conservation without requiring a single legal pathway for all project types.</p>	Tribes and other entities are eligible to work with CDs to apply for a project that is matched by an approved Lead Funder. SCC has added a pathway to approve additional Lead Funders that meet criteria determined by SCC to be necessary for administrative obligations of state funding.	Permanent Protection

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Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	<p>Section 3.22, Property Acquisition</p> <p>We encourage WSCC to consider expanding the definition of eligible Lead Funders to include Tribes and other public or community-based entities who can demonstrate conservation authority and accountability. This would open the door for more Tribally-led and community-rooted projects that may not fit the current list of eligible partners but are critical to riparian recovery.</p>	<p>SCC has added a pathway to approve additional Lead Funders that meet criteria determined by SCC to be necessary for administrative obligations of state funding.</p>	Permanent Protection
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	<p>Section 3.22, Reimbursable Costs</p> <p>The current requirement that a Lead Funder must hold, co-hold, or serve as a third-party beneficiary of the conservation instrument in perpetuity may unintentionally conflict with Tribal land governance. While we defer to Tribes to speak to matters of sovereignty, it's important to acknowledge that perpetual co-holding by a non-Tribal entity may not align with Tribal stewardship approaches.</p> <p>We recommend WSCC consider flexible alternatives for long-term protection structures when the standard model does not fit Tribal governance frameworks. Doing so would allow Tribes to determine the stewardship approaches that work best for their lands.</p>	<p>SCC appreciates the importance of this topic and we're exploring this further as the permanent protection category of funding is refined.</p>	Permanent Protection
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	<p>Section 3.22, Payment to Escrow</p> <p>We recommend WSCC reconsider the restriction on funding delinquent taxes at the time of property closing.</p> <p>Other major state funding programs have recognized this challenge and addressed it with flexibility. The Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), for example, allows delinquent taxes owed on a property prior to acquisition to be eligible on a case-by-case basis with pre-approval. This is clearly outlined in RCO Manual 3, Section 2: Eligible Projects and Costs, which states:</p> <p>"Taxes due at closing (compensating, excise, and pro rata taxes). Delinquent taxes owed on a property before the date acquired are eligible costs on a case-by-case basis with pre-approval from RCO."</p> <p>We encourage WSCC to consider adopting a similar policy. Aligning with RCO would provide much-needed consistency across state funding programs and allow Conservation Districts and land trusts to pursue strong acquisitions that may otherwise be blocked by a technicality.</p>	<p>SCC has updated the guidelines to allow reimbursement for costs that are allowable by a Lead Funder and aligned with state laws.</p>	Permanent Protection

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Mike Nordin - Pacific Conservation District	<p>1. Full opposition to SCC RGP funds allocated for any land acquisition -Land acquisition alone does not help or solve salmon riparian needs, or solve carbon capture and sequestration goals. Wisdom would say that both planting of the riparian area along with acquisition of land would be ideal, and that may be true, however the Washington State Legislature already allocates funding for acquisitions while funding for RGP is specific in function and is limited. Competition for funding is fierce and SCC should not mire the program with acquisition funding proposals.</p> <p>3. Full opposition to RCO RGP state funds allocated for acquisition -Once again, acquisition does not solve RGP needs, in addition some might use these funds for acquisition solely just to use up all the RGP funds in lue of lack of capacity or process to appropriately prioritize actual RGP projects.</p> <p>4. Strong opposition for any state funds allocated or used for any acquisition during the 25-27 biennium -Washington State is having budget shortfalls in all areas of Natural Resource arenas, therefor allocating funds to acquire more land during this biennium is not prudent. Instead a two year break on these activities is needed. Fund work on the ground instead of acquiring more land.</p>	Thank you for your comment. We are preserving a permanent protection project type to align with original legislative intent for our Riparian Grant Program and also honor the expressed desire of Tribal partners to enable permanent protection through easement/acquisition for riparian areas.	Permanent Protection
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	We say “environmental audits, chain of title reports, and site investigations such as test pits, test wells, and sample analysis”. Consider using that language in case current language would leave something out.	Thank you for your comment. The guidelines have been updated to include this language.	Permanent Protection
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	Maybe include “title reports” under deed and title search bullet?	Thank you for your comment. The guidelines have been updated to include this language.	Permanent Protection
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	Might be worth clarifying that the funding cannot be used to actually complete applications and do grant presentations to get funding. That is RCO boilerplate when using capital dollars.	Thank you for your comment. The guidelines have been updated to include this language.	Permanent Protection
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	What about engagement with local jurisdictions (i.e. consultation and local hearings)? We require that as a condition of moving forward in our WWRP programs, so that might be good to include here. Or maybe that’s included under partners.	Thank you for your comment. The guidelines have been updated to include "local jurisdictions" as recommended.	Permanent Protection
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	Does the CD have to actually hold or co-hold title on the recorded instrument? Or can they essentially sponsor an application on behalf of another entity that would ultimately hold title? Phrase “partner with another entity to hold the conservation interest” isn’t totally clear in that regard?	We have added language to clarify conservation districts are not required to hold title on the recorded instrument if another eligible entity is proposed to be the primary holder.	Permanent Protection

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Commenter Name	Comment	Response	Category A-Z
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	- RCO doesn't hold or co-hold per se as we don't own land. We'd have a third party interest held through a deed of right. I think the language is fine as written, just confirming	Thank you for your comment.	Permanent Protection
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	- If you haven't already, would be good to cross-check this list with our acquisition toolkit. Maybe that's what this is based on.	Thank you for your comment. We have cross-checked with RCO's materials and aligned language to be complementary.	Permanent Protection
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	- FYI, I think that we allow people to complete the Stewardship Plan within a certain time after closing. That may not be something you're comfortable with, but if RCO is a Lead Funder that may not always yet be available.	We have clarified the stewardship plan be provided when available.	Permanent Protection
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	- Would recommend essentially using RCO's list of incidental costs here (Manual 3, page 23-24), unless there is a specific reason that you've chosen to exclude certain ones. I think our list of costs is also aligned well with DOE and we manage WDFW programs.	Thank you for your comment. We have updated the list of example reimbursable costs to match RCO, and clarified that other costs acceptable to a Lead Funder are reimbursable from SCC if they are state allowable activities.	Permanent Protection
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	- RCO actually has a full list of what would constitute administrative costs (Manual 3, page 20); consider whether that level of detail is helpful or whether it makes more sense to keep it vague.	We have listed eligible expenses. SCC's Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual provides additional guidance.	Permanent Protection
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	- We cap administrative costs as a percentage of the total property and incidental costs combined. Just an FYI.	Thank you for your comment.	Permanent Protection
Nicholas Norton - Recreation and Conservation Office	- Would also be good to clarify whether these costs are eligible for reimbursement as pre-agreement costs. That would align with RCO policy and the vast majority of projects expend some of these prior to going under agreement in order to secure the property.	SCC will not reimburse pre-agreement costs. All costs associated with a project are eligible as a "Planning" application.	Permanent Protection
Lauren Templeton - Whatcom County	"Under the circumstances outlined below, RGP funds can support permanent protection by paying for planning costs to develop a permanent protection project and/or as match funding for an acquisition project funded through another public funding program." If there was an agricultural and riparian component of the easement, would RGP only cover the riparian area?	We have updated the Permanent Protection category to clarify that the Riparian Grant Program will contribute funds only towards the portion of the acquisition that relates to the riparian management zone.	Permanent Protection

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Mickey Fleming - Chelan-Douglas Land Trust	In the Upper Columbia region, our lead public agencies funding protection and acquisition are the Chelan, Douglas, and Grant PUD Public Utility Districts. Each has a habitat conservation plan and funds that are set aside to fund projects on a competitive application basis. The potential lead funding agencies that should be listed as eligible "Lead Funders" are the Grant County PUD, Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee (PRCC), and the Chelan County PUD Tributary Committees (TRIB Committees). Please ensure the Public Utility Districts of the Columbia Basin are included as lead funding agencies for protection projects to enable local sponsors to move forward with these excellent opportunities.	Thank you for your comment. An opportunity has been added for applicants to propose additional Lead Funder programs for SCC review and approval.	Permanent Protection
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	<p>We recommend that any program requirements related to land protection mechanisms do not compromise or infringe upon Tribal sovereignty. Participation in permanent protection activities should not imply any relinquishment of sovereign rights nor place unnecessary conditions on Tribal stewardship practices. The Colville Tribes consists of twelve tribes whose homelands cover much of Eastern Washington. The Colville Tribes have federally recognized and protected rights throughout eastern Washington. These rights are protected by statute, agreement, and executive order. Pursuant to federal law, these types of rights are exactly the same and to be treated in the same manner as rights protected by a treaty. This has been affirmed by the federal courts.</p> <p>We feel that specific language should be included that affirms that Tribal sovereignty remains fully intact, and that participation in the program, including permanent protection activities, does not imply any relinquishment of sovereign rights. Additionally, we suggest that flexibility or exceptions be provided where conservation easements or co-holding requirements could conflict with Tribal sovereignty.</p> <p>We also recommend that WSCC provide flexibility or exemptions for conservation easement structures where perpetual co-holding by a non-Tribal Lead Funder would conflict with Tribal sovereignty or stewardship practices.</p>	Thank you for highlighting the importance of this topic. SCC is committed to learning more about the concerns brought forward and are exploring this topic further with guidance from the Attorney General.	Permanent Protection
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	We wish to comment on how the current eligibility requirements for Lead Funders under the Permanent Protection section could inadvertently exclude tribally led conservation projects. The current guidelines list a limited set of Lead Funder programs whose secured or pending match funding is necessary for eligibility under Permanent Protection activities. However, we question why Tribes were not considered or included as Lead Funders, given that Tribes are recognized as partners to hold conservation interest via RCW 64.04.130.	Thank you for your comment. Tribes are eligible to apply in partnership with a conservation district for projects that are funded also through an established Lead Funder. SCC has added a pathway for approving additional Lead Funders, including Tribes, and we appreciate patience from our partners in conservation while we refine this program area. SCC will review the prospective Lead	Permanent Protection

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Commenter Name	Comment	Response	Category A-Z
	We recommend that the guidelines be updated to recognize Tribes as eligible Lead Funders or partners, so that tribally led conservation projects are not inadvertently excluded from accessing Permanent Protection support.	Funders program for compliance with SCC's obligation to administer a state-funded program.	
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	Since Conservation Districts (CDs) are currently the only entities eligible to apply for RGP funds, but often lack the capacity to manage land, it is imperative that CDs identify an entity to manage the property and hold conservation interest in the RGP application.	Thank you for your comment. Conservation districts may partner with an eligible entity when applying for acquisition project funding.	Permanent Protection
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	We also seek clarification on whether the property management or stewardship plan will only pertain to the riparian zone funded through the RGP.	The guidelines were updated to clarify that RGP funding is eligible for the RMZ portion of the property. As such, stewardship plans relevant to this program pertain to management of the RMZ.	Permanent Protection
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	We also wish to comment on how the current requirement that a Lead Funder must hold, co-hold, or serve as a third-party beneficiary of the conservation instrument in perpetuity could conflict with Tribal sovereignty over land management decisions. It is recommended that flexibility be allowed or an exemption for properties where perpetual co-holding by a non-Tribal Lead Funder would conflict with Tribal sovereignty, ensuring that tribally acquired lands can be permanently protected without conditions that conflict with sovereign stewardship practices.	SCC will rely on the policies of the pre-approved Lead Funder in this area. SCC will explore this important topic further with guidance from the Attorney General's Office.	Permanent Protection
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	We have determined that a fair market value appraisal of the riparian management zone is crucial for purchase and should be included in the planning cost list. Moreover, the acquisition or conservation easement process can be lengthy, often taking several months or years. To sustain interest and commitment from landowners, it would be advantageous to include earnest money as a planning cost, thereby compensating them for their patience. Regarding the cost share, we require clarification on whether it needs to be secured or encumbered before submitting a proposal to RGP, or if RGP funds will only be released once the cost share is secured.	Thank you for your comment. "Appraisal" has been added as an eligible planning cost. We acknowledge that Lead Funders will have various policies on earnest money, and for SCC, earnest money is not reimbursable when independent of a completed acquisition. Awards for acquisition projects will not made prior to demonstrating that Lead Funder match is secured.	Permanent Protection
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	We seek clarification on the timing requirements for match funding—specifically, whether the match must be fully secured at the time of application or only prior to the acquisition closing. Is it necessary for match funding to be fully secured at the time of application submission, or are pending match commitments acceptable until closing?	The Riparian Grant Program funds eligible projects on a rolling basis. Funds should be secured or in an award commitment from a Lead Funder at the time of application.	Permanent Protection

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Commenter Name	Comment	Response	Category A-Z
Rebecca Hunt, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	We question the current guideline language stating that "SCC will not pay for delinquent taxes due on the property at the time of closing." This policy could potentially result in missed opportunities for protecting high-priority riparian areas, particularly if back taxes present a barrier to otherwise strong conservation acquisitions. We request that SCC reconsider the restriction on funding delinquent taxes at closing, particularly were doing so would enable high priority riparian protection projects. For example, RCO allows delinquent taxes owed prior to acquisition to be eligible costs on a case-by-case basis with pre-approval. The RCO policy in Manual 3, Section 2: Eligible Projects and Costs is as follows: "Taxes due at closing (compensating, excise, and pro rata taxes). Delinquent taxes owed on a property before the date acquired are eligible costs on a case-by-case basis with pre-approval from RCO."	Thank you for your comment. We have clarified the guidelines to allow for this expense if it is eligible with the Lead Funders policies.	Permanent Protection
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	Permanent Protection We appreciate adding guidance on permanent protection in the updated guidelines. Its inclusion represents a clear improvement to the guidelines, aligning them closer with the proviso language than what was included in the interim guidance. However, we think this language could be further improved with a few additions and revisions. Specifically, we request WSCC add language emphasizing flexibility in the kinds of properties and situations that qualify for permanent protection.	Thank you for your comment. We intend to maintain flexible eligibility criteria that provides opportunities for high priority protection projects.	Permanent Protection
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	(121) - We also request WSCC expand the list of eligible Lead Funders to include local tribes and accredited private and public land trusts that can apply for permanent protection funds through the Riparian Grant Program.	In the draft guidelines presented on March 20 th , Tribes and land trusts are eligible to work with their conservation district to propose a project that is supported in part by an approved Lead Funder's program. We have also added a pathway to accept additional Lead Funders with developed acquisition programs, including Tribes. This is an area we will continue to refine as opportunities present themselves and the program matures.	Permanent Protection

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Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	(122) - Additionally, language in the proviso clearly indicates the Riparian Grant Program must give preference to permanent protection of riparian areas. We don't see that preference reflected in the project prioritization section of the guidelines. We request WSCC add language to the Project Prioritization section to indicate that projects resulting in permanent protection will be prioritized.	Applications are accepted on a rolling basis, and right now, preference is not established for any type of project. The 25-27 budget proviso for the voluntary riparian grant program removed permanent protection as a necessary category for funding, however SCC sees opportunity in this area of work and is maintaining this as a program category. SCC understands that permanent protection is an important area of work for salmon recovery and to Tribes.	Permanent Protection
David Giglio - Department of Ecology	<p>Include the Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture in the description of project planning best practices (section 3.10, pages 10-11). The addition of language directing CDs to reference and utilize best available science is valuable. Ecology requests the addition of the Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture (CWG) as a recommended resource. The CWG provides strong scientific basis for setting minimum buffer widths and provides information about what actions, when implemented and maintained as the necessary suites of practices, will restore water quality, improve habitat function, support climate resiliency goals, and provide landowners regulatory assurances. Ecology recommends the following edit (additional sentence inserted after the first sentence):</p> <p>"3.10 - Every reasonable effort must be made to reference and utilize best available science and NRCS' 9-step conservation planning process, with riparian considerations, as projects are planned and implemented. Plant selection, buffer widths, and other site-specific considerations are part of the conservation and project planning processes.</p> <p>If the project is intended to address a water quality resource concern, CD's should utilize Ecology's Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture: Chapter 12 Riparian Areas & Surface Water Protection.</p> <p>Project planning should consider restoring riparian functions to the best extent possible, considering the land use on the property and the functions of the riparian area. Conservation districts should work with local Tribes and other regional partners to identify high priority resource concerns, regional priorities and plan locally significant projects. Riparian functions are described in the USDA's Conservation Buffers: Design Considerations for Buffers, Corridors and Greenways (2008) and the Washington</p>	SCC leans on WDFW's Riparian Ecosystem Volumes I and II and the NRCS conservation planning framework as primary sources of guidance for the Riparian Grant Program. Other sources of information pertaining to the approach and requirements in place for other state programs may also be referenced by conservation districts as site specific planning occurs for riparian projects.	Reference Material-Planning

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	Department of Fish and Wildlife's Riparian Ecosystems Volume I: Science Synthesis and Management Implications (2020). See additional technical resources document for applicable compiled references."		
Chris Conklin - WDFW	Eligible Project Types and Activities: Section 3.6 provides funding to support riparian outreach and engagement. This section discusses but does not direct applicants to sources of best available science. We recommend adding language to encourage applicants to consider best available science when developing outreach materials. This change will help ensure applicants consider WDFW's riparian science, tools, and recommendations for protecting fully functioning RMZ's.	We moved the reference to planning materials in 3.10 from TA/Planning to 3.3 so the material is a preface to the entire section on project categories.	Reference Material-Planning
Chris Conklin - WDFW	We also recommend adding WDFW's 2023 Riparian Pollinator publication to the list of technical resources and directing applicants to WDFW's Areas of Responsibilities Map when referencing WDFW as a point of contact.	Management Recommendations for Washington's Priority Habitats and Species: Riparian Pollinators (2023) has been added to the Technical References document which is posted on the Riparian Grant Program webpage and referenced in the program guidelines.	Reference Material-Planning
Chris Conklin - WDFW	Project Prioritization: Section 5.5 lists additional criteria that may be considered when evaluating project proposals. We recommend adding the Washington Habitat Connectivity Action Plan (WAHCAP) to this list, as it represents a new statewide effort to identify, protect, and restore areas with habitat connectivity. This addition may assist in prioritizing projects with the highest ecological potential.	The Washington Habitat Connectivity Plan is in draft form at the time the RGP guidelines are being developed. When finalized, it will be added to Technical References.	Reference Material-Planning
Chris Conklin - WDFW	Riparian Data Engine: WDFW is developing a Riparian Data Engine to support decision making and facilitate the mapping, monitoring, and prioritization of riparian efforts statewide. The tool is expected to be available in 2025. We would like to brief the SCC on this resource and discuss options for how this tool can inform the Riparian Grant Program and other SCC efforts.	Thank you for your comment.	Reference Material-Planning
Ryan Williams - Cascadia Conservation District	Why was tiered incentives removed from the eligible project types?	Tiered incentives was removed in order to refine the payment and incentive structure, and to clarify administrative and eligibility requirements to participate in the program.	Tiered Incentives
Zorah Oppenheimer - Clark Conservation District	Can SCC provide a specific timeline or interim guidance for districts actively planning tiered incentive-related projects? - we need clear timelines and communications to effectively manage landowner expectations and plan for applications.	The guidelines for the Tiered Incentive project category will be refined throughout summer 2025 and are anticipated to be presented to the Commissioners towards the end of 2025. SCC is currently drafting the engagement plan for the Tiered Incentives update.	Tiered Incentives

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David Giglio - Department of Ecology	<p>Key areas from our previous letter where Ecology continues to hope we can achieve greater alignment include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligning incentive payment rates. To the extent possible, all the agencies working to implement buffers should try to align incentive/payment rates. Ecology recommends the SCC align payment levels with other state agencies funding this work to avoid one state program offering larger payments for similar sized or smaller buffers. Ecology looks forward to actively participating in the process of updating the tiered incentive part of the funding guidance. Ecology supports your reconsideration of the tiered incentive approach for this grant program. Having properly sized financial incentive payments are critical to getting effective buffers implemented on agricultural and forest lands. Provide more significant payments for implementing the 1 SPTH width buffer. The previous tier structure does not provide a higher incentive for reaching the full SPTH width. Ecology supports taking the prior tiered incentives out of the guidelines. As you revisit developing tiered incentives, Ecology recommends providing a bonus payment or structuring the tiered approach in a way that provides a significantly larger incentive for projects that achieve the full SPTH width. Wider buffers with native trees are critical to supporting our climate commitment funding goals. Aligning minimum eligibility requirements for incentive payments. When you revisit the tiered incentives, Ecology recommends that incentive payments be reserved for projects that will achieve compliance with water quality standards. The buffer widths in our Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture guidance are scientifically based and will assist landowners in achieving compliance with state water quality law. It is critical that we do not tell landowners two different requirements, and that we do not use state public funds to incentivize buffers that will not help landowners meet state laws. 	<p>SCC has committed to evaluating the tiered incentive framework to maximize participation and the restoration of ecological function. This effort will include coordinating with partner agencies.</p>	Tiered Incentives
David Giglio - Department of Ecology	<p>Increased alignment of state funding for riparian restoration will reduce the complexities of the funding landscape for project applicants, and, if aligned with the CWG, will support the state in meeting WQ standards, reducing our climate footprint and meeting salmon recovery goals. Ecology's uses the Riparian Areas and Surface Water Protection chapter of the CWG as the basis for eligibility minimums for the Water Quality Combined Funding Program. Additionally, the Climate Resilient Riparian Systems Lead (C2RSL) grant program for Puget Sound, developed in partnership between Ecology, the Conservation Commission, and Bonneville Environmental Foundation, has adopted the minimums of the CWG in their new funding guidelines. Having harmonized eligibility requirements between these two programs (C2RSL and the Water Quality Combined Grant program) increases opportunities for project proponents to bring together different funding sources to implement projects and creates a more cohesive state funding program based upon a foundation of the best</p>	<p>The SCC will work with partners, landowners, Tribes and stakeholders to develop an appropriate framework for the tiered incentives portion of the program.</p>	Tiered Incentives

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	available science to create results which will support riparian restoration and salmon recovery. Ecology believes there is great potential to align buffer minimums and incentives for meeting full SPTH as the buffer incentives aspect of this program continues to develop, and Ecology looks forward to increased opportunities to collaborate through the new tiered incentives development process.		
David Giglio - Department of Ecology	Funding awards that span across state fiscal biennia (Section 2.3, page 4). Ecology's buffer incentives project in the Hangman watershed has successfully allocated payments for long-term contracts, similar to the CREP model. Ecology has coordinated with Spokane CD to develop and administer a riparian incentives program that offers 15-year contracts to landowners to restore their riparian areas. Ecology highlights this as an example and potential framework for allocating funding across biennia, and support coordinating with the Commission to broaden this framework in support of longer-term contracts for riparian restoration.	SCC is pursuing the option of grant awards that span multiple biennium. Presently, CDs may apply for maintenance funds for up to ten years in subsequent biennium.	Tiered Incentives
David Giglio - Department of Ecology	<p>Tiered Incentives (Section 1.2, page 3). Ecology supports the concept of tiered incentives. Per the requirement in the proviso to coordinate with certain state agencies and CDs, please include Ecology in the list of entities the SCC will coordinate with in developing the tiered incentives. Ecology requests the following edit (in red):</p> <p>The SCC will continue to coordinate with conservation districts, Tribes, the Department of Ecology, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Agriculture, and private landowners and other stakeholders to refine the tiered incentives strategy and guidelines for the tiered incentives project type.</p> <p>Hopefully, through the upcoming process to revise the tiered incentive guidance we can find areas of common ground and alignment that could lead to changes in both of our funding programs. For example, Ecology would like to explore creating a tier that matches the minimum buffer width in our funding programs (which would make combining/leveraging our funding at the project or watershed level possible), explore combining efforts to support permeant protection, and come up with incentive amounts that Ecology could then incorporate into our program so that we have aligned incentive payment rates and avoid competing with each other.</p>	Thank you for your comment. The section has been updated to the proposed language, which is aligned with the language in the budget proviso.	Tiered Incentives
Chris Conklin - WDFW	Tiered Incentive Payments: We understand the tiered incentives payment section of the grant guidelines has been removed until it can be further refined. WDFW would like to continue to be involved in future working groups on this topic. Tiered incentives offer a unique opportunity to motivate landowners to implement wider buffers to achieve optimal functioning RMZ's. At a minimum, we recommend 100-footwide buffers to	SCC has committed to evaluating the tiered incentive framework to maximize participation and the restoration of ecological function. This effort will include coordinating with partner agencies.	Tiered Incentives

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	achieve full pollutant removal. To achieve full ecological function, buffers should extend out to site potential tree height at 200 years (in the forested ecoregion) or to the full extent of riparian vegetation that would otherwise occur (in the dryland ecoregion). Working collaboratively with state partners on this effort will help ensure alignment and consistency across our agencies and programs.		
Lauren Templeton - Whatcom County	Would love to still see options for incentive lease payments. Incentive lease payments can be more digestible for landowners than a permanent easement as it has a deadline. Also, Whatcom County sees very high land prices and being able to provide multiple incentive options can help with landowner engagement. Additionally, with the CREP situation, it would be helpful for landowner engagement to provide a different lease option.	SCC is committed to refining the tiered incentive portion of the program throughout 2025.	Tiered Incentives
Chevelle Yeckel - Okanogan Conservation District	We encourage WSCC to actively engage directly with all Tribes in both Eastern and Western Washington to better understand how programs like the Riparian Grant Program can support Tribal priorities and strengthen collaborative conservation. While WSCC provides program oversight, Conservation Districts are often the ones maintaining close working relationships with Tribes and implementing on-the-ground restoration and outreach. To sustain and grow these partnerships, it's essential that program guidelines are aligned with Tribal perspectives and do not create unintended barriers that complicate or limit relationship-building between Tribes and CDs. WSCC's flexibility in this space is critical to ensuring Conservation Districts can continue delivering meaningful, trust-based work in shared landscapes.	SCC appreciates the strong relationships between conservation districts and Tribes. SCC is working to improve the Tribal engagement strategy for updating program guidelines and developing strong information pathways in our work.	Tribal Engagement
Stephanie Martin - Makah Tribe	However, one thing that I think would be beneficial for SCC to consider is for tribal participation in the conservation district boards.	Thank you for your comment.	Tribal Engagement

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Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission	<p>Tribal Engagement</p> <p>We continue to have concerns about how WSCC has engaged with tribes in developing the guidelines and funding criteria for the Riparian Grant Program. In our January 2024 letter we requested WSCC reach out to individual tribes to discuss and improve the Riparian Grant Program's criteria, including the development and implementation of riparian area permanent protection measures. That outreach was inadequate. We appreciate the inclusion of multiple references in the current draft guidelines to engage and work with tribes when prioritizing projects, but we are concerned that the piecemeal effort to engage with individual tribes during the development phase of the program will carry over to its implementation.</p>	<p>We appreciate the significant efforts by Tribes to protect natural resources and in support of the conservation districts to implement this work. Our efforts to build relationships with Tribes are ongoing, and we appreciate the engagement from the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission to improve this effort. We recognize we received a low response rate to our engagement efforts and are building out strategies to improve our processes to consult with Tribes. SCC is funded in 2025-2027 to hire a Tribal Liaison to help with this work.</p>	Tribal Engagement
	<p>The Riparian Grant Program and its sister program in the RCO exist because of tribal efforts with Governor Inslee and legislators to support landowners in accomplishing the changes necessary to improve protection and restoration of riparian habitats. The Riparian Roundtable process is a testament to the continued importance to tribes and others in seeking to improve riparian protection and restoration. Meaningful tribal engagement is critical to these programs and processes, and to their continued existence and ultimate success.</p>		
	<p>(124) - State law requires state agencies allocating Climate Commitment Act funds offer “early, meaningful, and individual consultation with any affected federally recognized tribe on all funding decisions and funding programs that may impact tribal resources.” We request and expect WSCC to prioritize working effectively with tribes both before and after the guidelines are finalized, to ensure the Riparian Grant Program meets the intent of the proviso and is successful at achieving riparian management zone restoration and protection in Washington state “at a pace and scale not previously possible.”</p>		



Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

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FAX # 753-8659

May 23, 2025

James Thompson
Washington State Conservation Commission
Department of Ecology Building
300 Desmond Drive SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Re: Comments on the March 2025 Draft Guidelines for the Riparian Grant Program

Dear Mr. Thompson:

I'm glad you could join our coalition last month for our Puget Sound Day on the Hill event. We have many challenges ahead of us in our salmon recovery effort, but it was good to collaborate with you on this trip. While this letter is on a more specific subject matter, I wanted to acknowledge the partnership that we have with so many from various sectors in our state.

On behalf of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC), I'm writing to highlight some of the comments we previously provided on the proposed Riparian Grant Program guidelines. We provided those first set of comments on the interim guidelines in a letter dated January 17, 2024 (attached). While the NWIFC see these updated guidelines as a clear improvement over the interim guidelines, there are still several important issues of concern that have not been addressed and are being reiterated through this letter.

Stopping and reversing riparian habitat degradation remains a priority to the 20 treaty tribes in western Washington. We continue to look for ways to apply science to protect and restore treaty-protected salmon populations while increasing ecosystem health and climate resiliency in our watersheds. The NWIFC views the Riparian Grant Program as an opportunity to further these goals across the region. We fully support the intent of the program to "achieve riparian management zone (RMZ) restoration and protection in Washington state at a pace and scale not previously possible." Our comments are presented with that goal in mind and focus specifically on three areas – the Riparian Protection Standard, guidance on Permanent Protection, and Tribal Engagement in this process.

Riparian Protection Standard

In our January 2024 letter, we requested the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) follow language in the proviso (ESSB 5200) calling for the Riparian Grant Program to adopt program criteria that will achieve "optimal restoration of functioning riparian ecosystems." Specifically, we requested WSCC recognize the 1 site potential tree height buffer as a scientifically supported approach to achieving that goal. The new guidelines make no reference to site potential tree height.

Instead, the guidelines continue to refer to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) best management practices, such as 50-foot buffers along fish bearing streams, as the basis for the Riparian Buffer Standard. The science presented in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Riparian Ecosystems Volume I: Science Synthesis and Management Implications (2020) clearly indicates this standard, along with several other NRCS practices cited in the draft guidelines, are inadequate to meeting both the goal of "optimal restoration of functioning riparian ecosystems in priority critical riparian management zones" and the proviso's language that the WSCC "consider the best available, locally applicable science that is specific to each region of the state where the program criteria will be applied."

The proviso calls for grant funding to be informed by, consistent with, and aligned with at least one of a list of watershed and salmon recovery planning processes. The proposed guidelines recognize these recovery plans as the basis for prioritizing funding of projects yet include NRCS management practices as the basis for establishing a riparian protection standard. Along with being inconsistent with the intent and language of the proviso, inclusion of the NRCS management practices is inconsistent with this prioritization language. The NWIFC requests WSCC to remove specific reference to these management practices in the guidelines and instead refer to guidance provided in the proviso, WDFW's 2020 Riparian Ecosystems volume I, and where available, local watershed and salmon recovery plans to determine appropriate riparian protection standards that can be used to guide the funding of individual projects.

Permanent Protection

We appreciate adding guidance on permanent protection in the updated guidelines. Its inclusion represents a clear improvement to the guidelines, aligning them closer with the proviso language than what was included in the interim guidance. However, we think this language could be further improved with a few additions and revisions.

Specifically, we request WSCC add language emphasizing flexibility in the kinds of properties and situations that qualify for permanent protection. We also request WSCC expand the list of eligible Lead Funders to include local tribes and accredited private and public land trusts that can apply for permanent protection funds through the Riparian Grant Program. Additionally, language in the proviso clearly indicates the Riparian Grant Program must give preference to permanent protection of riparian areas. We don't see that preference reflected in the project prioritization section of the guidelines. We request WSCC add language to the Project Prioritization section to indicate that projects resulting in permanent protection will be prioritized.

Tribal Engagement

We continue to have concerns about how WSCC has engaged with tribes in developing the guidelines and funding criteria for the Riparian Grant Program. In our January 2024 letter we requested WSCC reach out to individual tribes to discuss and improve the Riparian Grant Program's criteria, including the development and implementation of riparian area permanent protection measures. That outreach was inadequate. We appreciate the inclusion of multiple references in the

current draft guidelines to engage and work with tribes when prioritizing projects, but we are concerned that the piecemeal effort to engage with individual tribes during the development phase of the program will carry over to its implementation.

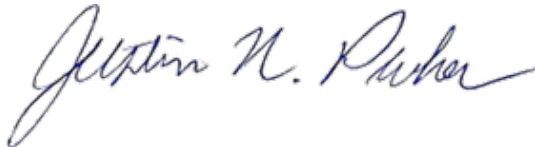
The Riparian Grant Program and its sister program in the RCO exist because of tribal efforts with Governor Inslee and legislators to support landowners in accomplishing the changes necessary to improve protection and restoration of riparian habitats. The Riparian Roundtable process is a testament to the continued importance to tribes and others in seeking to improve riparian protection and restoration. Meaningful tribal engagement is critical to these programs and processes, and to their continued existence and ultimate success.

State law requires state agencies allocating Climate Commitment Act funds offer “early, meaningful, and individual consultation with any affected federally recognized tribe on all funding decisions and funding programs that may impact tribal resources.” We request and expect WSCC to prioritize working effectively with tribes both before and after the guidelines are finalized, to ensure the Riparian Grant Program meets the intent of the proviso and is successful at achieving riparian management zone restoration and protection in Washington state “at a pace and scale not previously possible.”

To conclude, we propose scheduling a meeting between tribal and WSCC leadership before the guidelines are finalized to discuss tribal input and suggestions. The NWIFC believes there is an opportunity after the guidelines are finalized for the WSCC and conservation districts to begin working with local tribes to coordinate Monitoring and Adaptive Management efforts associated with Riparian Grant Program projects, especially in the context of ensuring that watershed and salmon recovery plans are implemented effectively and are achieving their intended outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the draft guidelines. We look forward to hearing back from you on our comments. If you have any questions, please contact Jim Peters, Habitat Policy Coordinator at (360) 485-2352 or jpeters@nwifc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Justin R. Parker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Justin" being more prominent.

Justin R. Parker
Executive Director

Attachment



Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

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FAX # 753-8659

January 17, 2024

Attachment 1

Shana Joy, District Operations Director/Southeast Regional Manager
Washington State Conservation Commission
Department of Ecology Building
300 Desmond Drive SE
Lacey, WA 98503

Re: Comments on the Draft Guidelines for the Riparian Grant Program

Dear Washington State Conservation Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the draft Riparian Grant Program Guidelines. We think this program represents an important opportunity for the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) to provide strong leadership in helping protect and restore riparian lands in Washington State. We do however have substantive concerns in how the guidelines propose spending the allocated funds. We are primarily concerned the draft language in the program guidelines, as currently written, is not consistent with the direction provided in the budget proviso authorizing and enabling the Riparian Grant Program.

Our concerns can be grouped into three general areas.

Tribal Participation. In adopting criteria for the Riparian Grant Program, the proviso emphasizes the WSCC must invite federally recognized tribes to be full participants. The current draft guidelines state that funding for the program comes with additional reporting, assessment, and tribal consultation requirements, and that the Governor's Office and state agencies "plan to engage tribes on how best to meet these requirements." It is not clear how the WSCC will meet this requirement. More importantly, there has been very limited outreach to the tribes to include them as participants in the adoption of criteria for the program. The tribes have been notably absent from the process to date. We respectfully request WSCC reach out to individual tribes over a set period of time to discuss and improve the program's criteria before adopting these criteria as final.

Optimal Restoration. The proviso states the WSCC is responsible for developing program criteria that will achieve "optimal restoration of functioning riparian ecosystems." We request WSCC recognize 1 Site Potential Tree Height (SPTH) in forested ecoregions as a scientifically supported approach to protecting and maintaining the full functions of riparian ecosystems (Riparian Ecosystems, Volume 1: Science Synthesis and Management Implications, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife). Under the current draft guidelines, program participants may protect 50' of the riparian area from the stream bank to qualify for base payments. Fifty-foot buffers will not achieve optimal restoration of functioning riparian ecosystems and should be considered an interim step. Program criteria should reference and support locally approved and published salmon and watershed recovery plans, which may be used as a guide for project implementation.

Permanent Protection. The budget proviso states the WSCC “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.” The guidance by the legislature to pursue permanent protection represents a real opportunity to long-lasting protection and recovery of riparian ecosystems. The draft guidelines indicate this project type is currently under development. Given how permanent protection is highlighted and emphasized in the budget proviso, fully articulating and implementing this program element should be prioritized. Implementing permanent protection may require creative and collaborative work and partnerships with other state agencies, tribes, land trusts or other entities willing to hold easement responsibilities for riparian areas, including monitoring. We respectfully request that WSCC work with tribes to help develop and implement permanent protection measure for riparian areas.

The funds provided to the WSCC as part of the budget proviso represent an important opportunity for Washington state to move forward in protecting and recovering riparian and aquatic ecosystems. We think however the current guidelines the WSCC has developed are inadequate at meeting the goal of protecting and restoring critical riparian management zones. We respectfully request the WSCC proactively reach out to the tribes and invite them to be full participants in the development of program criteria. We further request the WSCC direct the spending of program funds to support and incentivize landowners to establish adequate riparian buffers that support collaboratively developed watershed and salmon recovery plans, and in these efforts support, prioritize and incentivize the permanent protection of riparian management zones.

Finally, we respectfully request a meeting between the WSCC, key tribal and NWIFC staff, and representatives from the governor’s office to discuss and review the history and intended outcomes of the budget proviso and the Riparian Grant Program. This meeting will also be an opportunity for us to discuss how tribes and the WSCC can effectively work together in the development of the Riparian Grant Program, and ultimately support landowners to successfully utilize voluntary programs that comprehensively protect riparian areas necessary for salmon recovery and climate resiliency.

Thank you and we look forward to hearing back from you on our comments. If you have any questions, please contact Jim Peters (jpeters@nwifc.org), Habitat Policy Coordinator, or Fran Wilshusen (fwilshusen@nwifc.org), Director of Environmental Protection at (360) 438-1180.

Sincerely,



Ed Johnstone
Chairman

Attachment



The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation

P.O. Box 150, Nespelem, WA 99155

(509) 634-2200

FAX: (509) 634-4116



Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Washington State
Conservation Commission
PO Box 47721
Olympia, WA 98504-7721
Phone (360) 407-6200
Fax (360) 407-6215

Dear Washington State Conservation Commission,

We, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (“Colville Tribes”), are writing to provide our comments on the proposed changes outlined in your recent guidelines. It is in the interest of the Tribes that consultation be established early in any decision-making process and should be conducted regularly. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion and offer the following observations:

Permanent Protection Language (Section 3.22)

We recommend that any program requirements related to land protection mechanisms do not compromise or infringe upon Tribal sovereignty. Participation in permanent protection activities should not imply any relinquishment of sovereign rights nor place unnecessary conditions on Tribal stewardship practices. The Colville Tribes consists of twelve tribes whose homelands cover much of Eastern Washington. The Colville Tribes have federally recognized and protected rights throughout eastern Washington. These rights are protected by statute, agreement, and executive order. Pursuant to federal law, these types of rights are exactly the same and to be treated in the same manner as rights protected by a treaty. This has been affirmed by the federal courts.

We feel that specific language should be included that affirms that Tribal sovereignty remains fully intact, and that participation in the program, including permanent protection activities, does not imply any relinquishment of sovereign rights. Additionally, we suggest that flexibility or exceptions be provided where conservation easements or co-holding requirements could conflict with Tribal sovereignty.

We also recommend that WSCC provide flexibility or exemptions for conservation easement structures where perpetual co-holding by a non-Tribal Lead Funder would conflict with Tribal sovereignty or stewardship practices.

It is recommended that the granting program cautioned applicants in advance that restoration projects may cause adverse impact to archaeological sites and places used for religious or cultural practices. To disturb these places is against the law. Organizations and individuals may be required to have historic property surveys in advance.

Lead Funder Requirements and Tribal Match Considerations (Section 3.22)

We wish to comment on how the current eligibility requirements for Lead Funders under the Permanent Protection section could inadvertently exclude tribally led conservation projects. The current guidelines list a limited set of Lead Funder programs whose secured or pending match funding is necessary for eligibility under Permanent Protection activities. However, we question why Tribes were not considered or included as Lead Funders, given that Tribes are recognized as partners to hold conservation interest via RCW 64.04.130.

We recommend that the guidelines be updated to recognize Tribes as eligible Lead Funders or partners, so that tribally led conservation projects are not inadvertently excluded from accessing Permanent Protection support.

Since Conservation Districts (CDs) are currently the only entities eligible to apply for RGP funds, but often lack the capacity to manage land, it is imperative that CDs identify an entity to manage the property and hold conservation interest in the RGP application. We also seek clarification on whether the property management or stewardship plan will only pertain to the riparian zone funded through the RGP.

We also wish to comment on how the current requirement that a Lead Funder must hold, co-hold, or serve as a third-party beneficiary of the conservation instrument in perpetuity could conflict with Tribal sovereignty over land management decisions. It is recommended that flexibility be allowed or an exemption for properties where perpetual co-holding by a non-Tribal Lead Funder would conflict with Tribal sovereignty, ensuring that tribally acquired lands can be permanently protected without conditions that conflict with sovereign stewardship practices.

We have determined that a fair market value appraisal of the riparian management zone is crucial for purchase and should be included in the planning cost list. Moreover, the acquisition or conservation easement process can be lengthy, often taking several months or years. To sustain interest and commitment from landowners, it would be advantageous to include earnest money as a planning cost, thereby compensating them for their patience. Regarding the cost share, we require clarification on whether it needs to be secured or encumbered before submitting a proposal to RGP, or if RGP funds will only be released once the cost share is secured.

We seek clarification on the timing requirements for match funding—specifically, whether the match must be fully secured at the time of application or only prior to the acquisition closing. Is it necessary for match funding to be fully secured at the time of application submission, or are pending match commitments acceptable until closing?

Delinquent Taxes and Property Acquisition Costs (Section 3.22)

We question the current guideline language stating that “SCC will not pay for delinquent taxes due on the property at the time of closing.” This policy could potentially result in missed opportunities for protecting high-priority riparian areas, particularly if back taxes present a barrier to otherwise strong conservation acquisitions. We request that SCC reconsider the

restriction on funding delinquent taxes at closing, particularly were doing so would enable high-priority riparian protection projects. For example, RCO allows delinquent taxes owed prior to acquisition to be eligible costs on a case-by-case basis with pre-approval. The RCO policy in Manual 3, Section 2: Eligible Projects and Costs is as follows:

“Taxes due at closing (compensating, excise, and pro rata taxes). Delinquent taxes owed on a property before the date acquired are eligible costs on a case-by-case basis with pre-approval from RCO.”

Buffer Width Flexibility (Sections 4.5 and 4.6)

We acknowledge and support WSCC’s flexibility regarding minimum buffer widths. This flexibility—allowing exceptions where property lines, topography, hydrology, or cultural resource protections constrain full buffer application—reflects a thoughtful approach to the diverse conditions present across Reservation lands, traditional territories, and Okanogan County as a whole. This approach acknowledges the complex realities of Washington’s landscapes and the need to adapt conservation practices to site-specific conditions. Maintaining this flexibility supports the health of critical riparian areas, which are essential to cultural continuity and ecosystem resilience.

Project Prioritization (Section 5)

We suggest expanding the prioritization criteria to better recognize the role of outreach and capacity-building projects. As currently written, the guidelines state: “All projects must lead to improved functions within a critical riparian management zone (RMZ).” We recommend a slight revision to also value outreach efforts that build the long-term capacity of landowners and community members to improve RMZ functions, even if direct support for outreach activities is limited under current funding structures. It is imperative that all projects lead to improved functions within a critical riparian management zone (RMZ) or aim to increase capacity for landowners and community members to improve RMZ functions.

Recognizing outreach and education alongside direct on-the-groundwork could support long-term stewardship goals, build conservation readiness among communities, and ultimately strengthen the impact of future implementation projects.

Maintenance Timeline (Section 3.17)

We support the proposed change to extend maintenance eligibility to 10 years. Maintenance is critical to long-term project success but has historically been underfunded. Shorter windows often leave restoration sites vulnerable before full ecological function is achieved, risking investment and habitat recovery. Expanding eligibility to 10 years better matches the realities of riparian restoration, especially in Eastern Washington, where establishing native vegetation and controlling invasive species often takes longer than five years. A 10-year window more accurately reflects the ecological timelines required for riparian restoration, allowing projects to achieve lasting outcomes and better steward the public investment.

Biochar BMP Addition (Section 4.10, Table 1)

We suggest adding biochar application as an eligible Best Management Practice (BMP) in Table 1. Biochar is already an NRCS-approved conservation practice that improves soil moisture retention, supports healthy root growth, and boosts plant survival, especially in drier areas where riparian restoration is more challenging. Including biochar would give landowners and districts another tool to help restoration projects succeed under tough conditions.

We appreciate your consideration of our comments and look forward to working together to enhance conservation efforts across Washington State.

Sincerely,



Jarred-Michael Erickson, Chairman
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation

cc: Colville Business Council
Executive Director
Natural Resource Director
Fish & Wildlife Director
Colville Reservation Conservation District

May 7, 2025

To the Washington State Conservation Commission and the Washington Association of Conservation Districts

Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) Riparian Grant Program (RGP) Position Statement

1. Full opposition to SCC RGP funds allocated for any land acquisition
-Land acquisition alone does not help or solve salmon riparian needs, or solve carbon capture and sequestration goals. Wisdom would say that both planting of the riparian area along with acquisition of land would be ideal, and that may be true, however the Washington State Legislature already allocates funding for acquisitions while funding for RGP is specific in function and is limited. Competition for funding is fierce and SCC should not mire the program with acquisition funding proposals.
2. Strong opposition to RGP state funds allocated to RCO
-All RGP fund allocations should be placed solely with the SCC. CD's statewide specialize in RGP projects. RCO does not specialize in RGP activities nor are equipped for allocating properly processed projects. RCO is recreating the wheel, so to speak, and is not doing a very good job, at least in PCD's opinion. In addition, RCO salmon activities do not cover all of Washington state and its watersheds, but SCC does. The cooling and nutrient needs of the stream should be addressed in even none salmon bearing streams statewide. RCO/SRFB do not cover the whole state via WRIA salmon recovery areas. RCO/SRFB's proposal is to allocate via lump sums to WRIA groups at percentages already deemed by salmon recovery area allocations. Keep the funding where the correct apparatus already exists and functions at a high level.
3. Full opposition to RCO RGP state funds allocated for acquisition
-Once again, acquisition does not solve RGP needs, in addition some might use these funds for acquisition solely just to use up all the RGP funds in lue of lack of capacity or process to appropriately prioritize actual RGP projects.
4. Strong opposition for any state funds allocated or used for any acquisition during the 25-27 biennium
-Washington State is having budget shortfalls in all areas of Natural Resource arenas, therefor allocating funds to acquire more land during this biennium is not prudent. Instead a two year break on these activities is needed. Fund work on the ground instead of acquiring more land.

Sincerely,



Mike Nordin
Pacific Conservation District Manager



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

PO Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600 • 360-407-6000

May 9, 2025

James Thompson, Executive Director
Washington State Conservation Commission
PO Box 47721
Olympia, WA 98594-7721

Re: Riparian Grant Program Guidelines Update

Dear Director Thompson:

Through Climate Commitment Act funding and this program, the state has an extraordinary opportunity to significantly increase the pace of riparian restoration in Washington. Restoration of riparian habitat is needed for salmon survival and population recovery, as well as, for our federal obligation to meet water quality standards. The WSCC Riparian Grant Program is an excellent opportunity for our agencies to collaborate in meaningful ways that lead to durable solutions to challenging ecosystem recovery goals for the people of Washington.

It is important to be innovative and collaborative in providing consistent financial assistance programs to the agriculture community and other landowners that incentivize the riparian buffers that are supported by best-available science and designed to be climate resilient. This is especially true given the current budget climate.

As Ecology communicated last year in our comment letter on the interim Riparian Grant Program Guidelines, we value the State Conservation Commission's (SCC) role to implement voluntary, incentive-based programs. We also appreciate the huge undertaking it took to stand up a new riparian restoration grant program. As one of the state agencies the proviso requires the SCC to coordinate with when adopting program criteria, Ecology continues to be dedicated to providing feedback to the SCC on how we can better align our grant programs and ensure our grant guidelines make sound environmental investments. This is a significant opportunity for our agencies to demonstrate that collaborative leadership will result in more durable approaches to riparian restoration for the state. As the SCC moves forward with adopting additional criteria related to tiered incentives, Ecology is prepared to participate in any processes or groups that the SCC forms.

The new updates included several changes that Ecology supports:

- Added language recognizing improving water quality is one of the purposes of the program.
- Reporting metrics: Ecology supports the inclusion of more specific reporting requirements.
- Maintaining eligibility for projects that result in permanent protection. In a preview draft of the grant guidelines update the section on permeant protection was removed. Ecology is happy to see that you reinserted that section and encourage you to keep it in the funding guidelines.
- Updates to the Maintenance Section: Ecology recognizes the importance of maintenance projects and supports its inclusion as an eligible project under this program. The additions of reporting metrics and reference to the cultural resources review process are good improvements to this section.
- Instream Activities: Ecology supports the new requirement for engineered design plans for projects that involve engineered rock or large wood placement.
- Livestock BMPs: Ecology supports eligibility for exclusion fence and other supporting BMPs. Ecology supports the clear statement that "For all projects funded under this program, livestock access and/or grazing of the riparian management zone (RMZ) is not allowed."
- Native Vegetation: Ecology supports the reference to the Washington Native Plant Society Native Plant Directory.

Of the concerns outlined in our original comment letter, the minimum parcel size requirement of 1-acre has been removed by this update. Ecology supports this change. However, it does not appear as though the new updates to the guidelines make any additional changes to address the key concerns Ecology highlighted. As a reminder, the previous comment letter encouraged increases to incentivizes for riparian buffers that achieve the one site potential tree height (SPTH) width and including minimums for incentive payment eligibility that support meeting water quality standards. As that comment letter stated, our grant programs do not need to be identical, however, aligning our respective grant guidance will make the state-funded programs more effective at meeting multiple habitat, climate and water quality functions and values we are trying to address statewide. Key areas where Ecology continues to hope we can achieve greater alignment include:

- Aligning incentive payment rates.
- Provide more significant payments for implementing the 1 SPTH width buffer.
- Aligning minimum eligibility requirements for incentive payments.

The SCC is a leader in voluntary conservation and critical to achieving our long-term goals for riparian restoration in Washington State. The SCC and conservation districts are vital to achieving riparian restoration at the scale which is necessary to meet our state and federal commitments. Meaningful collaboration across state natural resource agencies will establish riparian restoration programs that provide a consistent message to landowners and reduce confusion around regulatory expectations. Additionally, better alignment of funding requirements should lead to efficiencies for agencies and project sponsors, allowing us to more easily combine grant funds, speed up the review of projects already deemed eligible under one program, and to leverage all available state dollars. There is a real opportunity here for the state to converge around grant program requirements, learn from successful approaches, and adapt our funding programs to achieve what we all want, functional riparian areas that support our recovery goals.

The aim of our feedback continues to be underscoring the importance of incentivizing buffers that will truly protect water quality, be climate resilient and address salmon habitat needs. Ecology is also advocating for all natural resource agencies within Washington to promote similar, science-based practices that will sufficiently address these resource concerns. It's important that all state voluntary and grant programs support protective minimums and align with the state's nonpoint program to provide more significant incentives for wider buffers.

Attached are additional comments on the updates. Ecology hopes the SCC will consider them as well as our original comments and adjust the program to ensure we use this historic funding to meet our salmon, water quality and climate resiliency goals. This is an excellent opportunity for our two agencies to collaborate and come together. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



David Giglio
Acting Water Quality Program Manager

Enclosure

cc: Brooke Beeler, Department of Ecology Eastern Regional Office Director

Enclosure

Key areas from our previous letter where Ecology continues to hope we can achieve greater alignment include:

- Aligning incentive payment rates. To the extent possible, all the agencies working to implement buffers should try to align incentive/payment rates. Ecology recommends the SCC align payment levels with other state agencies funding this work to avoid one state program offering larger payments for similar sized or smaller buffers. Ecology looks forward to actively participating in the process of updating the tiered incentive part of the funding guidance. Ecology supports your reconsideration of the tiered incentive approach for this grant program. Having properly sized financial incentive payments are critical to getting effective buffers implemented on agricultural and forest lands.
- Provide more significant payments for implementing the 1 SPTH width buffer. The previous tier structure does not provide a higher incentive for reaching the full SPTH width. Ecology supports taking the prior tiered incentives out of the guidelines. As you revisit developing tiered incentives, Ecology recommends providing a bonus payment or structuring the tiered approach in a way that provides a significantly larger incentive for projects that achieve the full SPTH width. Wider buffers with native trees are critical to supporting our climate commitment funding goals.
- Aligning minimum eligibility requirements for incentive payments. When you revisit the tiered incentives, Ecology recommends that incentive payments be reserved for projects that will achieve compliance with water quality standards. The buffer widths in our Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture guidance are scientifically based and will assist landowners in achieving compliance with state water quality law. It is critical that we do not tell landowners two different requirements, and that we do not use state public funds to incentivize buffers that will not help landowners meet state laws.

In addition to the comments previously made on the grant guidelines, Ecology offers the following additional feedback on the updates:

Reporting metrics (section 2.11, page 5). Ecology appreciates that the draft updated guidelines include language that describes more specific reporting requirements, as transparent reporting of implementation information has utility beyond the evaluation of a single program's success. Implementation information, especially when publicly available, provides other entities working in an area the ability to track progress and identify where additional effort and resources would best be allocated. Ecology recommends reporting metrics to include the width of new riparian buffers planted, to increase the ability to assess the successes of the riparian grant program. Additionally, Ecology looks forward to future collaboration as, per the proviso language, the Commission works to establish "...a data management system that allows for coordination between the commission and other state agencies."

Informing landowners of regulatory risks (section 3.2, page 8). Ecology supports the Commission promoting transparent conversations between CD staff and landowners/operators regarding regulatory risk. Ecology recommends that, in addition to informing program participants of the potential impacts of local land use codes, that CDs should be encouraged to share information about Washington's Water Pollution Control Act, and the potential regulatory risk of contributing pollution to state waters, as well as the recommended actions that will help to address and alleviate that risk (i.e. recommended actions provided in the Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture).

Include the Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture in the description of project planning best practices (section 3.10, pages 10-11). The addition of language directing CDs to reference and utilize best available science is valuable. Ecology requests the addition of the Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture (CWG) as a recommended resource. The CWG provides strong scientific basis for setting minimum buffer widths and provides information about what actions, when implemented and maintained as the necessary suites of practices, will restore water quality, improve habitat function, support climate resiliency goals, and provide landowners regulatory assurances. Ecology recommends the following edit (in red):

3.10 - Every reasonable effort must be made to reference and utilize best available science and NRCS' 9-step conservation planning process, with riparian considerations, as projects are planned and implemented. Plant selection, buffer widths, and other site-specific considerations are part of the conservation and project planning processes.

If the project is intended to address a water quality resource concern, CD's should utilize Ecology's Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture: Chapter 12 Riparian Areas & Surface Water Protection.

Project planning should consider restoring riparian functions to the best extent possible, considering the land use on the property and the functions of the riparian area. Conservation districts should work with local Tribes and other regional partners to identify high priority resource concerns, regional priorities and plan locally significant projects. Riparian functions are described in the USDA's Conservation Buffers: Design Considerations for Buffers, Corridors and Greenways (2008) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Riparian Ecosystems Volume I: Science Synthesis and Management Implications (2020). See additional technical resources document for applicable compiled references.

Riparian restoration practices and minimums (section 4, pages 14-15). Ecology recommends that the program should not fund projects that only plant herbaceous vegetation in riparian areas. Ecology doesn't believe that funding herbaceous cover in the riparian area will achieve

the goals of the budget proviso and support the Climate Commitment Act's goal of reducing our state's overall carbon footprint and creating a healthier climate. The current draft language suggests that herbaceous cover would be allowable throughout "dryland ecosystems," which are later (diagram on page 22) suggested to include areas in which the upland is characterized by sagebrush and bunchgrass. Ecology asks for clarification on what areas would be considered "dryland ecosystems" for the purpose of allowing riparian herbaceous cover to be implemented, as Ecology believes that many areas of the state that support sagebrush and/or bunchgrass uplands are areas where trees and shrubs are native riparian vegetation. Should riparian herbaceous be an allowable practice within the riparian zone, Ecology asks for a narrowing of that definition and making clear that if trees and/or woody vegetation (which capture and store carbon) can grow in the riparian area, it must be planted to be eligible for grant funds.

Additionally, Ecology continues to request that minimum buffer widths are aligned with the minimums of the Clean Water Guidance. The buffer minimums of the CWG are designed to provide cool water, support healthy ecological function, promote resiliency from climate change and rising temperatures, and ensure clean water for Washington's residents today and into the future. Additionally, Ecology believes that the CWG provides more flexibility for landowners, as minimum widths are tailored to the stream size, and the various alternatives allow for different land uses, to provide landowners and operators with the ability to tailor their buffer implementation to match their needs for their land; supporting both clean water and agriculture. In support of promoting effective buffer minimums, Ecology also recommends removing the Hedgerow Planting Practice from the list of eligible practices.

Increased alignment of state funding for riparian restoration will reduce the complexities of the funding landscape for project applicants, and, if aligned with the CWG, will support the state in meeting WQ standards, reducing our climate footprint and meeting salmon recovery goals. Ecology's uses the [Riparian Areas and Surface Water Protection chapter¹](#) of the CWG as the basis for eligibility minimums for the Water Quality Combined Funding Program. Additionally, the Climate Resilient Riparian Systems Lead (C2RSL) grant program for Puget Sound, developed in partnership between Ecology, the Conservation Commission, and Bonneville Environmental Foundation, has adopted the minimums of the CWG in their new funding guidelines. Having harmonized eligibility requirements between these two programs (C2RSL and the Water Quality Combined Grant program) increases opportunities for project proponents to bring together different funding sources to implement projects and creates a more cohesive state funding program based upon a foundation of the best available science to create results which will

¹ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/parts/2010008part6.pdf>

support riparian restoration and salmon recovery. Ecology believes there is great potential to align buffer minimums and incentives for meeting full SPTH as the buffer incentives aspect of this program continues to develop, and Ecology looks forward to increased opportunities to collaborate through the new tiered incentives development process.

Funding awards that span across state fiscal biennia (Section 2.3, page 4). Ecology's buffer incentives project in the Hangman watershed has successfully allocated payments for long-term contracts, similar to the CREP model. Ecology has coordinated with Spokane CD to develop and administer a riparian incentives program that offers 15-year contracts to landowners to restore their riparian areas. Ecology highlights this as an example and potential framework for allocating funding across biennia, and support coordinating with the Commission to broaden this framework in support of longer-term contracts for riparian restoration.

Tiered Incentives (Section 1.2, page 3). Ecology supports the concept of tiered incentives. Per the requirement in the proviso to coordinate with certain state agencies and CDs, please include Ecology in the list of entities the SCC will coordinate with in developing the tiered incentives. Ecology requests the following edit (in red):

The SCC will continue to coordinate with conservation districts, Tribes, the Department of Ecology, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Agriculture, and private landowners and other stakeholders to refine the tiered incentives strategy and guidelines for the tiered incentives project type.

Hopefully, through the upcoming process to revise the tiered incentive guidance we can find areas of common ground and alignment that could lead to changes in both of our funding programs. For example, Ecology would like to explore creating a tier that matches the minimum buffer width in our funding programs (which would make combining/leveraging our funding at the project or watershed level possible), explore combining efforts to support permeant protection, and come up with incentive amounts that Ecology could then incorporate into our program so that we have aligned incentive payment rates and avoid competing with each other.



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504-3200 • (360) 902-2200 • TDD (360) 902-2207

Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia, WA

April 15, 2025

Mr. James Thompson, Executive Director
Washington State Conservation Commission
P.O. Box 47721
Olympia, WA 98504-7721

Dear Mr. Thompson,

SUBJECT: SCC RIPARIAN GRANT PROGRAM DRAFT GUIDELINES

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the 2025 Riparian Grant Program draft guidelines. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) values our partnership with the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) and is strongly supportive of your agency's commitment to advancing voluntary and incentive-based conservation. Advancing the restoration of functioning riparian ecosystems represents a historic and urgent opportunity to work alongside your organization, partners, and stakeholders to preserve and recover salmon populations for future generations. It's a privilege to work with you and others on this historic effort. Please consider the following comments regarding the draft program guidelines.

Alignment with WDFW Riparian Guidance: We appreciate the SCC's efforts to align the Riparian Grant Program draft guidelines with WDFW's [riparian science and resources](#), which includes designating the riparian area as the Riparian Management Zone (RMZ), considering all stream types for funding, and encouraging and incentivizing applicants to restore riparian functions to the greatest extent possible. Your agency's thoughtful inclusion of our riparian science is appreciated. And we have identified elements of your riparian guidance that could be further strengthened to ensure applicants strive to restore fully functioning RMZ's.

- **Eligible Project Types and Activities:** Section 3.6 provides funding to support riparian outreach and engagement. This section discusses but does not direct applicants to sources of best available science. We recommend adding language to encourage applicants to consider best available science when developing outreach materials. This change will help ensure applicants consider WDFW's riparian science, tools, and recommendations for protecting fully functioning RMZ's.

We also recommend adding WDFW's [2023 Riparian Pollinator](#) publication to the list of technical resources and directing applicants to WDFW's [Areas of Responsibilities Map](#) when referencing WDFW as a point of contact.

- **Eligible Best Management Practices:** Section 4.3 describes the riparian buffer standards that applicants must meet. We appreciate that these standards strive to plant tall trees wherever feasible and legal. We recommend adding language to encourage applicants to go above and beyond the minimum buffer widths set by the Natural Resource Conservation Service. This

language will strengthen the guidelines' support for restoring fully functioning RMZs. WDFW's online Site Potential Tree Height (SPTH) [mapping tool](#) and [field protocol](#) allows users to determine the recommended buffer width for achieving a fully functioning RMZ and would be a useful tool to assist applicants.

- **Project Prioritization:** Section 5.5 lists additional criteria that may be considered when evaluating project proposals. We recommend adding the [Washington Habitat Connectivity Action Plan](#) (WAHCAP) to this list, as it represents a new statewide effort to identify, protect, and restore areas with habitat connectivity. This addition may assist in prioritizing projects with the highest ecological potential.

Tiered Incentive Payments: We understand the tiered incentives payment section of the grant guidelines has been removed until it can be further refined. WDFW would like to continue to be involved in future working groups on this topic. Tiered incentives offer a unique opportunity to motivate landowners to implement wider buffers to achieve optimal functioning RMZ's. At a minimum, we recommend 100-foot-wide buffers to achieve full pollutant removal. To achieve full ecological function, buffers should extend out to site potential tree height at 200 years (in the forested ecoregion) or to the full extent of riparian vegetation that would otherwise occur (in the dryland ecoregion). Working collaboratively with state partners on this effort will help ensure alignment and consistency across our agencies and programs.

Riparian Data Engine: WDFW is developing a [Riparian Data Engine](#) to support decision making and facilitate the mapping, monitoring, and prioritization of riparian efforts statewide. The tool is expected to be available in 2025. We would like to brief the SCC on this resource and discuss options for how this tool can inform the Riparian Grant Program and other SCC efforts.

We appreciate your agency's work on the draft Riparian Grant Program Guidelines and for including WDFW in your stakeholder review. We value the collaborative approach that went into developing the original guidelines and for your agency's intent to hold up our riparian science.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Chris Conklin", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Conklin, Program Director
WDFW Habitat Program

Riparian Grant Program Guidelines

DRAFT ~~March-June~~ 2025⁵⁴

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References to proviso language will be updated if needed when the final 25-27 biennium budget language is available.	

Program Overview

1 - Program Background

The Riparian Grant Program was established in 2023 through a \$28 million state legislative appropriation in **Senate Bill 5200** to protect and restore riparian areas in Washington state. The purpose of the grant program is to improve habitat and water quality through riparian improvements that benefit salmon recovery priorities throughout the state. This program intends to achieve riparian management zone (RMZ) restoration and protection in Washington state at a pace and scale not previously possible.

The funds came with proviso language specifying how the funds were to be used:

- (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.*

The full proviso language may be referenced [here](#) for further details.

~~In the 2023 legislative session, revenues collected as a result of the **Climate Commitment Act** were appropriated to the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC). This program has been funded **wholly in part** by the **Climate Commitment Act**, associated funding.~~ The Climate Commitment Act (RCW 70A.65) created a market-based program to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the next few decades. A portion of the revenues are directed into the Natural Climate Solutions Account and were distributed into several standing grant programs, including this riparian specific program.

1.1 - Funding comes with additional reporting, assessment, and tribal **consultation notification requirements.** Climate Commitment Act pre-application tribal notification instructions are available on the **SCC CCA webpage**. The SCC will provide guidance to

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applicants as CCA notification and reporting requirements are revised. ~~The Governor's Office and state agencies plan to engage Tribes on how best to meet these requirements. The SCC will provide any needed guidance to applicants as soon as possible.~~

1.2 —This document provides guidance for activities funded through the Riparian Grant Program with specific detail for planning, restoration, maintenance and associated activities. The tiered incentives project type has been removed from this version of the guidelines and will be drafted as a supplement to these guidelines. The SCC will continue to coordinate with conservation districts, Tribes, the Department of Ecology, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Agriculture, landowners and other stakeholders to refine the tiered incentives strategy and guidelines for the tiered incentives project type.

2 - General Eligibility

Conservation districts are the only entities eligible to apply to the SCC for this program. Conservation districts must meet all Standard 1 Accountability requirements in the Conservation Accountability and Performance Program in order to be eligible. All other organizations, agencies, and entities *are encouraged to work with their local conservation district* to identify, support, and partner on riparian project implementation. Find your local conservation district [here](#).

All land ownerships are eligible under this program including private, tribal, federal, state, non-profit organization, or local government ownerships. ~~However, only lands not owned by governmental agencies are eligible for tiered incentive payments.~~

2.1 – Projects must demonstrate an improvement to a critical riparian management zone. “Critical riparian management zone” is defined in the proviso as:

(12)...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.

All stream types regardless of the presence of salmonids are eligible for riparian restoration and protection projects under this program. ~~However, tiered incentive payments have additional restrictions.~~

2.1.1 - Projects are eligible if they are designed to benefit the native salmon, steelhead, trout and char prioritized in plans within the salmon recovery regions identified by the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office. Projects may be eligible outside of a salmon recovery region if multi-stakeholder planning efforts have identified riparian resource concerns and the project will benefit salmon recovery, including areas where coordinated reintroduction efforts are planned. The term “salmon” throughout this document refers to native salmon, steelhead, trout and char.

General Requirements

Timelines

2.2. - ~~Work Progress~~ must begin on all funded proposals within 120 days of the award of funding, or provide a reason(s) or justification for delays. - applicable work could be outreach, project planning or technical assistance, or project installation. ~~Funds appropriated to the SCC by the Washington State Legislature in 2023 were capital funds appropriated for a two-year time frame, through June 30, 2025.~~ To be eligible for reimbursement, all work including all project types (see below) must be completed by June 30, 2025-2027the end of the fiscal biennium and vouchered for in July following the end of the biennium-20257. Any remaining unspent awarded grant funds **may** be extended into future fiscal years if those unspent funds are reappropriated to the SCC by the legislature. There is no guarantee of continued legislative appropriations or reappropriations for this program beyond a bienniumJune 30, 20252027; however, SCC does anticipate continuing to seek funds for this program as well as reappropriation of any remaining unspent funds.

Projects, such as outreach, funded by operating funds cannot be extended beyond the biennium and should be returned as soon as possible after identifying they will not be needed for the project. Unspent outreach project funds cannot be extended beyond June 30, 20252027, because outreach projects will be funded by one-time operating funds not eligible for reappropriation.

2.3 - SCC is pursuing changes to the grant award system which will allow funding awards that span across the state fiscal biennium. In the event this system is developed, award dates which extend beyond June 30, 2027the state's fiscal biennium, may be allowed. It should not be assumed that a funding award date is extended. If this opportunity becomes available, fiscal awards and contracts may need to be amended. The steps for implementing this change will be communicated to conservation districts.

2.3.1 - All general requirements and policies of the SCC must be followed as set out in the [Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual](#) including but not limited to monthly grant vouchering and cultural resources policy compliance. Additional requirements may apply due to the Climate Commitment Act funding source and guidance will be made available as soon as possible.

2.4 – Application and Reporting

All applications for funding must utilize the application form provided on the [Riparian Grant Program Webpage](#). is form: [Riparian Grant Program Application Form](#). Applicants may apply for one or more eligible project types in the same application.

2.5 - Riparian Grant Program funding will be accepted and reviewed monthly. allocated on an ongoing basis every two weeks, with application deadlines announced once final program guidelines are published and will continue. Funding awards will be allocated for as long as funds remain available. Application deadlines will be announced on the [Riparian Grant Program Webpage](#). Applications will be initially reviewed by an internal team of SCC staff for completeness, adherence to program guidelines, and the extent to which the proposal

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addresses identified priorities. Additional review of proposals may occur including, but not limited to, consultation with Tribes.

2.6 - If proposed work partially funds a BMP, a detailed explanation must be included in the application as to which components are proposed for RGP funding and which other funding sources are sought or already secured to complete the entire proposed project or BMP.

2.7 - Applications must include enough detail to determine the eligibility of all activities. Incomplete or vague applications may result in an extended review period or a request to resubmit an application.

2.8 - An application may be partially funded if the application includes ineligible activities or activities for which funding is not currently available. Additionally, if funds are limited, applications will be reviewed and ranked according to adopted and published prioritization criteria; a portion of an application may rank a higher priority than other proposed projects or project types. For example, in a situation of limited funding, some project types **off** activities **may** be prioritized over other project types. Prioritization is generally described in Project Prioritization section.

2.9 - A conservation district may submit more than one application over the course of a granting period. There is no guarantee or assurance that funding will remain available.

2.10 - Scope Changes

Any scope of work changes to an approved and funded project may only be made upon review and approval by SCC staff. Contact the program manager to discuss any scope of work change requests. Expenditures related to a changed scope are eligible only after the change is approved by SCC staff. Proposals for new project sites must be submitted in a new application. Changes between project types (landowner implemented cost share to District Implemented Project or vice versa) may not be made once work has been done or expenditures have occurred.

~~All applications for funding must utilize this form: Riparian Grant Program Application Form.~~

2.11 - Reporting

Reporting on all activities utilizing Riparian Grant Program funding is required. Reporting requirements are intended to collect information that will be used **by SCC** to:

- quantify metrics of best management practices installed, including, but not limited to
 - **acres of new restoration**planted in riparian areas,
 - **acres maintained**miles of streambanks planted,
 - **number of trees/shrubs installed**average restored riparian width,
 - **acres of restored land maintained,**
 - **miles of streambank protected by land or easement acquisition,**
 - **other units as applicable to the** **practices installed through the program.**
- summarize regional impacts of the program, such as funding allocated, quantity of BMP installation, and leveraged funding and partnerships, and
- meet Climate Commitment Act requirements.

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A list of all metrics collected for each installed eligible practice is available for reference on the Riparian Grant Program webpage.

Reporting is required for all activities utilizing Riparian Grant Program funding. The following is required:

- Grant activities will be reported utilizing the form provided on the **Riparian Grant Program** ~~w~~**Webpage**. this form: **Riparian Grant Program Reporting Form**.
- Cost-share and district implemented projects must be entered into SCC's Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS) as the primary repository for BMP metrics.
- Climate Commitment Act reporting is required. A report form will be provided by SCC for that purpose.

Additional reporting requirements may be added as additional guidance becomes available pertaining to Climate Commitment Act funds reporting. ~~Cost share projects will be reported utilizing SCC's Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS) while all other work will be reported utilizing this form:~~ **Riparian Grant Program Reporting Form**

Cultural Resources

All projects must comply with SCC's **Cultural Resources Policy and Procedures**. Costs for cultural resources reviews or surveys will be vouchered for as a separate outcome and reimbursed separately from individual grant awards.

2.12 - Climate Commitment Act

In accordance with the Climate Commitment Act, conservation districts must track all direct and meaningful benefits provided to vulnerable populations within overburdened communities. The following definitions are provided:

Direct and meaningful benefits are:

- The direct reduction of environmental burdens in overburdened communities.
- The reduction of disproportionate, cumulative risk from environmental burdens, including those associated with climate change.
- The support of community led project development, planning, and participation costs.
- Meeting a community need identified by the community that is consistent with the intent of the CCA or HEAL Act.

Overburdened communities are defined for the purposes of CCA as geographic regions identified as overburdened communities in the map prepared by Washington Office of Financial Management (Overburdened Communities).

Vulnerable populations (Per the HEAL Act and Climate Commitment Act) -

"Vulnerable populations" means population groups that are more likely to be at higher risk for poor health outcomes in response to environmental harms, due to: (i) Adverse socioeconomic

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factors, such as unemployment, high housing and transportation costs relative to income, limited access to nutritious food and adequate health care, linguistic isolation, and other factors that negatively affect health outcomes and increase vulnerability to the effects of environmental harms; and (ii) sensitivity factors, such as low birth weight and higher rates of hospitalization.

"Vulnerable populations" includes, but is not limited to:

- (i) Racial or ethnic minorities;
- (ii) Low-income populations;
- (iii) Populations disproportionately impacted by environmental harms; and
- (iv) Populations of workers experiencing environmental harms

2.13 - Climate Commitment Act pre-application tribal notification instructions are available on the **SCC CCA webpage**. Pre-application notification for CCA is distinct from cultural resource compliance and the two processes must be completed separately.

2.14 - Any printed materials, digital materials, or signage funded by the Climate Commitment Act require specific branding and logos. An FAQ and instructions are **available here**.

2.15 - Subcontracting

Conservation districts may partner with other organizations or agencies to implement RGP work through subcontracts or agreements. The arrangement must be formalized in accordance with the SCC Grants and Contracts Policy Manual guidance for interagency agreements, subcontracting, or work crews, as applicable. BMPs installed by another organization via a subcontract or agreement must comply with SCC requirements and the conservation district must be party to the agreement between the subcontractor and the landowner or a district landowner agreement must be in place. Requirements for BMP installation, including practice design life maintenance and retention, must be included in accordance with the program requirements for DIP projects. Subcontracts may also be used to facilitate participation by partners, such as Tribes, in prioritization or planning efforts. The intention to subcontract must be included in the conservation district's application.

3 – Eligible Project Types and Activities

All projects and activities must be designed to improve “critical riparian management zones”.
“Critical riparian management zone” means:

(12)... 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.

Critical riparian management zones may be located upstream of salmon presence if improving the riparian management zone is anticipated to provide downstream benefits. Further justification of the anticipated downstream and/or salmon benefits will be required for any proposed project not within a **salmon recovery region** as identified by the Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office.

Justification for projects located outside of a salmon recovery region must reference a local or regional plan and describe how the project relates to the content of the plan and provides a benefit of salmon recovery. Projects in watersheds where coordinated salmon reintroduction efforts are planned are eligible. See the Project Prioritization section for a list of relevant plans.

If the location of the project is not referenced in an existing plan, conservation districts must submit a letter of support from a regional WDFW biologist affirming the site or region and activity will provide a benefit to salmon recovery.

3.1 - Eligible Lands

All land ownerships are eligible for riparian restoration and maintenance under this program including private, tribal, federal, state, non-profit organization, or local government ownerships. ~~However, land owned by governmental agencies or non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) are not eligible to enroll for tiered incentive payments.~~ Conservation districts may implement projects within another district’s boundaries with permission from that district. Conservation districts may complete projects outside of their district boundaries and with municipalities that are not part of the conservation district at the district’s discretion.

3.2 — It is the intent of this program to provide technical and financial assistance to landowners/managers/lessees to protect and enhance ecological functions of riparian management zones. Potential program participants (landowners/managers/lessees) should be informed that **state, federal or local land use codes or regulations** may apply which restrict the conversion of riparian buffer to other land uses after the expiration of a project agreement or contract.

Tiered incentive payments have additional restrictions which are outlined further in the Tiered Incentives Section.

3.3 - Project Types

Riparian Grant Program funds may be used for the following eligible project types:

- riparian restoration program outreach,
- technical assistance/planning/design/monitoring,
- landowner implemented cost share,
- District Implemented Projects,
- ~~tiered incentive payments,~~
- maintenance, and
- permanent protection.

~~Any scope of work changes to an approved and funded project may only be made upon review 3.4 - and approval by SCC staff. Also, changes between project types (landowner implemented cost share to District Implemented Project or vice versa) may not be made once work has been done or expenditures have occurred.~~

3.10 - Every reasonable effort must be made to reference and utilize best available science and the Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) 9-step conservation planning process, with riparian considerations, as projects are planned and implemented. Plant selection, buffer widths, and other site-specific considerations are part of the conservation and project planning processes.

Project Outreach, planning, and implementation should consider restoring riparian functions to the best extent possible, considering the land use on the property and the functions of the riparian areamanagement zone. Conservation districts should work with local Tribes and other regional partners to identify high priority resource concerns, regional priorities and plan locally significant projects. Riparian functions are described in the USDA's Conservation Buffers: Design Considerations for Buffers, Corridors and Greenways (2008) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Riparian Ecosystems Volume I: Science Synthesis and Management Implications (2020). See additional technical resources document for applicable compiled references. Refer also to the definition of riparian ecosystems when considering the width of the riparian management zone to include riparian and upland zone of influence considerations.

The following are the eligible project types and associated parameters of each type. There is no set limit or cap on amount of funds that may be requested under any given project type. The availability of funds will be provided on an ongoing basis as funding awards are made. Instream projects/practices are only eligible if connected with a riparian management zone restoration component.

3.6 - Riparian Restoration Program Outreach

~~Program outreach is supported through. This project type incorporates additional limited operating funding appropriated separately to "support the outreach, identification, and~~

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implementation of salmon riparian habitat restoration projects that are appropriated through the capital budget.” This project type will be eligible under this program based upon funding availability for these activities. ~~When funds are available, program announcements will clearly state so.~~ Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, ~~advertising, production of promotional materials/mailers/brochures, translation services, television or radio ads, social media costs, workshops, podcasts, and door-knocking.~~

- **Outreach and Promotion:** Advertising (print, digital, TV, and radio), production of mailers, brochures, and newsletters, translation services, and social media outreach, including targeted ads and video production.
- **Workshops and Community Engagement:** In-person and virtual workshops, webinars, podcasts, tours, peer-to-peer networking, and door-to-door or phone outreach to landowners.
- **Interactive and Visual Storytelling:** Story mapping, GIS tools, project signage, demonstration sites, and success stories.
- **Data Collection and Partnerships:** Stakeholder and community surveys, partnership development with Tribes and conservation groups, and exhibits at local events.

Eligible expenditures under this project type include: salaries, benefits and overhead, goods and services, light refreshments, in-state travel, event registration, reasonable sponsorships with pre-approval, and booth rentals. **General administrative office equipment, such as computers, is not eligible.**

3.7 – ProjectsOutreach activities must aim to identify and support future riparian habitat restoration projects, clustered or grouped in targeted priority locations(s), **in alignment and be aligned** with local planning priorities. The primary content of the materials must relate to riparian management or program. General district outreach is not eligible. Outreach activities should be designed to target specific areas, such as workshop locations, mail recipients, and activity participants. Applicants must provide specific details, including watershed(s) targeted, and include metrics for tracking these outreach activities. Metrics should capture the number of individuals engaged, the geographic areas reached, and any projects identified or initiated.

Youth-focused activities are not eligible. Planting activities using youth volunteers may be funded as district implemented projects.

3.8 - For outreach focused planting events, planning and volunteer coordination should be applied for as outreach, while the costs for implementing the project must be applied for as DIP, Cost-share or Maintenance.

The SCC may award capital funds for outreach activities in accordance with the RGP proviso for capital funding.

Technical Assistance/Planning/Design/Monitoring

3.9 - This project type Technical assistance, planning, design, and monitoring includes all activities to plan and fully design projects with landowners/managers/lessees including, but not limited to, GIS data analysis (such as to inform targeted outreach to shoreline adjacent properties, local project prioritization efforts, or to support monitoring), local planning and project prioritization efforts, site visits, project development, meetings with landowners or partners, conservation or best management practice specific planning, project designs, engineering if needed on a case-by-case basis, preliminary permitting, and follow-up project monitoring activities.

~~3.10 – Every reasonable effort must be made to reference and utilize best available science and NRCS' 9-step conservation planning process, with riparian considerations, as projects are planned and implemented. Plant selection, buffer widths, and other site-specific considerations are part of the conservation and project planning processes.~~

~~Project planning should consider restoring riparian functions to the best extent possible, considering the land use on the property and the functions of the riparian area. Conservation districts should work with local Tribes and other regional partners to identify high priority resource concerns, regional priorities and plan locally significant projects. Riparian functions are described in the USDA's Conservation Buffers: Design Considerations for Buffers, Corridors and Greenways (2008) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Riparian Ecosystems Volume I: Science Synthesis and Management Implications (2020). See additional technical resources document for applicable compiled references.~~

3.10.1 Eligible expenditures under this project type include: salaries and benefits, overhead, **pre-approved** program/project related training or project development equipment, in-state travel, and professional services contracts. Training must be related to improving the technical knowledge of staff to plan and implement successful RMZ projects. General administrative office equipment, such as computers, is not eligible. Pre-approval occurs through submitting details of the training request or proposed equipment purchase in the application or by requesting approval in written communication with SCC staff the program manager. The applicant must describe how the purchase is necessary to implement the Riparian Grant Program activities.

Monitoring equipment is limited to tools necessary to monitor and adaptively manage the restoration activities.

~~Training must be related to improving the technical knowledge of staff to plan and implement successful RMZ projects.~~

Staff costs to implement a project, such as planting installation and on-the-ground site management should be applied for in the DIP category. This information is used to distinguish between the costs of providing technical assistance and installing a BMP or project.

3.10.2 Technical assistance, planning projects and training may be awarded from either operating or capital budgets and will be identified on the grant contract.

3.11 - Landowner Implemented Cost Share

~~Landowner implemented cost-share is This project type utilizes the~~ SCC's traditional cost-share project type where a landowner implements best management practices first and seeks reimbursement for eligible costs from the administering conservation district. The project type requires the use of SCC's Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS) and the cost-share contract generated from that system. ~~Conservation districts are encouraged to fund riparian restoration work at a 100% cost-share rate to incentivize these projects, however, a district's board may approve alternative cost-share rates for this program. All projects of this type will utilize a 100% cost-share ratio. The SCC will provide a required addendum template to be used for all tiered incentives whether a landowner implemented cost share or District Implemented Project. Refer to the SCC Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedure Manual for eligible expenditures and the— policies related to cost-share assistance on public lands.~~

3.12 - Practices must be retained and maintained for the practice design life. The design life of practices is determined by SCC or USDA – [Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#) and the information can be found on the [SCC Conservation Practice Data System \(CPDS\) webpage](#).

3.13 - District Implemented Projects (DIP)

~~This project type is a~~ District implemented projects are projects in which the conservation 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., for example,~~ installing riparian buffers on several consecutive properties along a creek. In this project type, the district is taking full responsibility for installation/construction of the project. ~~When a district implements a project, the district is responsible for activities including, which may include, but is not limited to,~~ acquiring permits, bidding, and purchasing processes, and prevailing wage requirements.

3.14 - A District Implemented Project **must not include** cost-sharing or cash reimbursement, to a landowner(s) with Riparian Grant Program or other SCC funds. The district is assuming all responsibility for project planning and construction directly. [Refer to the SCC Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedure Manual for eligible expenditures.](#)

3.15 - A Landowner Agreement is required for any District Implemented Projects completed on property not owned by a district and a fully signed copy must be provided to SCC at the time of vouchering. ~~If a DIP includes project is followed by enrollment in the payment of tiered incentives paid to a landowner, a Tiered Incentives Addendum must be included in the landowner agreements. SCC will provide a required addendum template to be used for all tiered incentives whether the project is installed as the a landowner implemented cost share agreement or a DIP.~~

3.16 - Practices must be retained and maintained for the practice design life. Conservation Districts must [address](#) this requirement in their agreements with land [owners/managers](#). The

design life of practices is determined by SCC or USDA – NRCS and the information can be found on the [SCC Conservation Practice Data System \(CPDS\) webpage](#).

3.17 - Maintenance

~~This project type~~ Maintenance projects include performing maintenance in **critical** riparian management zones, regardless of funding source or program responsible for initial installation for up to 105 years. [Maintenance of the RMZ after ten years is the responsibility of the landowner/manager/lessee.](#)

3.18 - Eligible activities include, but are not limited to:

- ~~re-planting to address mortality or~~ [improve](#) species diversity,
- ~~watering/irrigation,~~
- ~~manual invasive weeds control (pulling, mowing),~~
- ~~chemical invasive weeds control (following all rules and regulations pertaining to herbicide application),~~
- ~~biological control (where appropriate and approved),~~ [placement,](#)
- ~~replacement, or placement, or removal~~ of herbivorous animal control (tree tubes, beaver fencing etc.), removal of unnecessary weed [control measures](#) (plastic mulch),
- ~~repairs to low-tech instream projects, and~~

~~herbivorous control methods.~~

3.19 - Maintenance may be performed on any eligible land ownership [with documented landowner permission](#). [The maintenance responsibilities by a conservation district and/or land manager should be clearly stated in cost-share agreements or landowner agreements to preserve the investment in the property. Landowner permission documentation is to be kept on file at the district office for review upon request.](#) There is no set limit on maintenance costs per acre as the needs and related costs for this work will vary across the state.

3.20 - Maintenance project reporting will include the number of participants and acreage maintained. Site locations, funding source for the original installation (i.e.: other agencies, SCC programs) and frequency of maintenance must be kept by the district and available upon request.

3.21 - Maintenance activities require cultural resource [compliance](#). **if the activities are likely to be soil-disturbing and were not included in a prior cultural resources review process.**

3.21.1 Eligible expenditures under this project type include: salaries and benefits, overhead, goods (materials) and services (contracted labor, for example), pre-approved equipment required to conduct maintenance activities, and in-state travel.

3.22 -Permanent Protection

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~~This project type is still under development by SCC. Conservation easements are one possible eligible activity under consideration. SCC will review and evaluate for funding, on a case-by-case basis, innovative ready-to-go proposals that provide permanent protection of riparian management zones to be considered as pilot projects in the 2023-25 biennium. Due diligence requirements for any project proposals that include land acquisition or conservation easements are significant. Though the intent of the transaction and the conservation values protected will differ, the minimum transaction, due diligence, and record-keeping requirements can be found in the SCC's Farmland Protection and Land Access program guidelines linked [here](#).~~

Permanent Protection

Permanent protection projects include both fee simple and conservation easement acquisitions **for critical riparian management zones** on properties that align with the criteria of the Riparian Grant Program and address a riparian protection or restoration priority identified in a locally applicable watershed or salmon recovery plan.

Under the circumstances outlined below, RGP funds can support permanent protection by paying for planning costs to develop a permanent protection project and/or as match funding for an acquisition project funded through another public funding program.

Planning

Costs associated with planning a permanent protection project for a critical riparian management zone is eligible. Eligible activities include:

- resource mapping to document streams, wetland, riparian and upland resources on the property,
- mapping and assessing the land use impacts on the property,
- **environmental audits, chain of title reports, and site investigations such as test pits, test wells, and sample analysisPhase 1 environmental assessment,**
- preliminary review of water rights,
- **title reports,** deed and title search,
- broker opinion of value,
- **appraisal** and
- engagement with the property owner, partners, **local jurisdictions**, and potential funders.

The products of permanent protection planning activities may be used to apply for funding from a Lead Funder program listed below. **Funds may not be used to write grant applications or for presentations associated with grant application processes.**

Eligible costs include salaries, benefits and overhead, mileage, legal fees, and other direct costs related to project planning. Equipment is not eligible. Training and conferences are not eligible.

Property Acquisition

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Conservation districts may apply for match funding for eligible property interest acquisitions which result in permanent protection of critical Riparian Management Zones. Eligible acquisitions include both fee simple and conservation easement acquisitions on properties of critical Riparian Management Zones that align with the criteria of the Riparian Grant Program (RGP), and which have been evaluated and selected for funding by a relevant riparian protection funder ("Lead Funder"). RGP Property Acquisition funding may be used for riparian fee simple or conservation easement capital expenses, and to cover the related acquisition costs.

The intent of the RGP Permanent Protection funding is to provide match for acquisition of critical Riparian Management Zones (RMZ). As such, RGP will fund up to 50% of the appraised value of the defined RMZ area proposed for protection. In the scenario where protection of the defined RMZ is unable to proceed without acquisition of upland areas outside the RMZ on the same parcel, RGP will fund up to 100% of the appraised value of the defined RMZ area, or an amount not to exceed 50% of the total property's appraised value, whichever is less.

In no circumstance will RGP reimburse capital costs in excess of 50% of the total subject property's appraised property value.

SCC will determine this eligibility with the following criteria:

- 1) Riparian protection or restoration at the project location is identified in a watershed or salmon recovery plan as an activity that is beneficial to salmon recovery. The project location may be identified specifically or regionally in the plan, such as within a watershed or reach identified for riparian improvement.
- 2) Demonstration of secured or pending funding agreement from one of the following approved Lead Funder programs, for which the RGP Permanent Protection funds will be matched. Lead Funder programs can be established riparian conservation acquisition programs at federal, state, Tribal, or local government agencies that align with the intent and criteria of the RGP and which meet the due diligence requirements for SCC Release of Funds Requirements (pg 3). Approved Washington State Lead Funders at the time of issuing the RGP guidelines include:
 - a) Washington Recreation and Conservation Office's Salmon Recovery Grant Programs
 - b) Washington Department of Natural Resources
 - c) Washington Department of Ecology
 - d) Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
 - USDA—NRCS
 - County Conservation Futures
- 1) Lead Funders at the state, federal, Tribal, or local level can be approved upon request and at SCC's discretion. Examples include USDA-NRCS, EPA, County Conservation Futures, Bonneville Power Administration, and local Public Utility Districts. Applicants will be asked to confirm the proposed Lead Funder's policies and procedures regarding the following criteria:

1. The program funds permanent protection of riparian zones as an eligible program activity and aligned purpose of the program;
2. The program requires completion of all minimum due diligence requirements outlined under the "Release of Funds Requirements" of these RGP Guidelines;
3. The program includes a requirement for sponsors to conduct compliance monitoring on a frequency no less than once every five years (a copy of monitoring reports will be provided to SCC for all funded projects);
4. The program includes a policy on addressing conversions of land acquired with the Lead Funder program, such as identification of replacement lands at the same or higher appraised and conservation values; and
5. The program can certify compliance with all relevant state regulations.

Applicants may be required to demonstrate how proposed non-state Lead Funders are able to meet the acquisition policies and requirements outlined in RCO's Manuals 3 (Acquisition) and 7 (Long Term Obligations).

Applicants proposing a Lead Funder other than a previously approved Lead Funder should anticipate a Lead Funder or application review process that may take several months.

SCC will review and evaluate eligible applications for this match funding monthly, as described in the Application section of the guidelines. Projects may include funding from a source not included in the list of Lead Funders (i.e. additional match contributions), as long as an approved Lead Funder is funding a portion of the acquisition and will retain an interest (hold, co-hold, or third-party beneficiary) in the final recorded instrument. If a CD applicant proposes to partner with another entity to hold be the primary holder of the conservation interest, the other entity must be legally authorized to hold a conservation interest under RCW 64.04.130. When another eligible entity is proposed to be the primary holder, the CD is not required to hold or co-hold title on the recorded instrument.

SCC may require specific deed restriction or property encumbrance language which will be reviewed prior to approving an award for acquisition.

Projects determined to meet the eligibility criteria will be awarded funding on a first-come first-serve basis as long as funds remain available.

Method of Payment :

Payment to Escrow

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

- Up to 50% of the fee simple or conservation easement purchase price, as established by appraisal.
- Up to 50% of the following: taxes due at closing (compensating, excise and pro rata taxes), title reports and insurance, and recording fees. SCC will not pay for delinquent taxes due on the property at the time of closing.

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Reimbursable Costs

RGP will reimburse up to 50% of total project costs determined to be eligible by the Lead Funder's program and funding guidelines. In no scenario will SCC reimburse for any costs that are not allowed under Washington state law or are inconsistent with state law regarding open space acquisitions including RCW 8.26.180. Costs eligible for reimbursement from SCC may include:

- Appraisal and review appraisal of acquired property interest - one per property
- Property surveys
- Recording fees, closing fees,
- Environmental assessment
- Environmental audits, chain of title reports, and site investigation such as test pits, test wells, and sample analysis
- Baseline documentation - conservation easement only
- Boundary line adjustments, lot line adjustments, and subdivision exemptions
- Property management or stewardship plan, not to exceed \$10,000
- Project management costs, including staff time, travel and legal expenses directly related to acquiring the property is eligible. Project management costs are Administrative costs, not to exceed \$50,000 unless approved by the SCC Executive Director or their designee. Applicant legal fees are considered an administrative cost.
- Reimbursement shall not be approved for any donations, including donated land.

Release of Funds Requirements

Projects must demonstrate that all due diligence and evaluation requirements of the Lead Funder are satisfactorily completed before funds will be released. Copies of all standard due diligence materials required by the Lead Funder must be provided to SCC prior to release of funds. At minimum, this will include:

- a. Appraisal
- b. Review Appraisal
- c. Baseline Documentation including site-specific map and general vicinity map (easement acquisition only)
- d. Title Commitment
- e. Final Conservation Deed, Easement, or Covenant Language
- f. Purchase and Sale Agreement
- g. Mortgage Subordination Agreement, if applicable (easement acquisition only)
- h. Property Environmental/Hazardous Substances Review, if applicable
- i. Settlement Statement
- j. Property Management and/or Stewardship Plan, if available-applicable

-
In addition, projects must demonstrate that the Lead Funder will hold, co-hold, or be a third-party beneficiary of the acquired property interest. These Lead Funder-held obligations must be

perpetual in nature, and/or match the duration of the recorded instrument (property deed, covenant, and/or conservation easement). The documentation provided to SCC before funds are released to escrow ~~should~~ must include:

- a. Identification of the Lead Funder's contribution to escrow on the Settlement Statement;
- b. Identification of the Lead Funder's perpetual property interest in the Deed, Easement, or Covenant document prepared for recording; and
- c. Closing instructions that specify closing and recording is contingent on receipt by escrow of the Deed, Easement, or Covenant document(s) signed and notarized by the appropriate authority of the Lead Funder.

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

- a. Exact funding amount needed
- b. Date needed
- c. Name of the entity needing to be paid directly,
 - a. bank name,
 - b. ABA or routing number,
 - c. name of the account owner,
 - d. account number,
 - e. effective settlement date (and any other wire instructions pertinent such as property address).

After closing, the grant applicant is required to:

- a. Provide notice via email to RGP Manager and SCC Grants Manager within 5 business days of closing.
- b. Provide an electronic copy of the recorded conservation instrument (Conservation Deed, Easement, or Covenant).

-

Record Keeping and Audits

The grant applicant must retain a complete set of all documents and records pertaining to the purchase of a conservation interest using RGP funding pursuant to the applicable records retention schedule. See the most recent version of the "State Government General Records Retention Schedule here."

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

3.23 - Tiered Incentives

Tiered incentives are annual payments made to a landowner, land manager or lessee for participating in riparian management zone restoration and protection under this program. Incentive payments are in addition to the actual cost of riparian restoration work (under a cost-share or District Implemented Project) or maintenance of a new or existing stream buffer.

See further Gguidelines and requirements are in the Tiered Incentives section.

4 - Eligible Best Management Practices

~~All project proposals must include eligible activities.~~ Eligible activities are those intended to increase protection and/or restoration of riparian habitat. Riparian restoration projects above barriers to anadromous fish passage are eligible if they contribute to salmon recovery in the region. Further justification of the anticipated downstream and/or salmon benefits will be required for any proposed project not within a salmon recovery region. See *Table 1. Eligible Best Management Practices* below for list of eligible best management practices (BMPs).

4.1 - Instream Activities

Instream activities with no connection to **critical** riparian management zone restoration included in the same application will not be funded. If a cost-share or DIP the project involves practices that require engineering, such as engineered rock or large wood placement, engineered design plans must be submitted with the application and will be used to evaluate the project's readiness to proceed with funding. ~~A proposed project including instream work must include a riparian habitat restoration component to be eligible. See Table 1. Eligible Best Management Practices below for list of eligible best management practices (BMPs).~~

Additional criteria that will be considered for any instream proposed work:

- Is the instream work critical/essential to successful riparian restoration?
- Is the proposed funding needed to complete the instream work reasonable as compared to the riparian restoration component of the proposal? For example, instream work is not a majority of the proposed work and funding requested.

All instream BMPs must be done in conjunction with a riparian restoration activity.

RGP funding for Aquatic Organism Passage is limited to projects on private land that removes a passage impairment. The funding may be used to match a project which includes a crossing re-installation but RGP funds must contribute only to the removal and restoration aspects of the work.

4.2 - Livestock BMPs

Practices related to livestock exclusion from the riparian area are eligible for funding. Livestock water wells may be funded if the practice is accompanied by livestock exclusion from the riparian area. For all projects funded under this program, livestock access and/or grazing of the critical riparian management zone (RMZ) is not allowed. Restricted livestock watering access, such as water gaps, in the RMZ may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Include in the application the rationale for planning a water gap and a detailed plan and map demonstrating controlled access. Applications must demonstrate why livestock exclusion is not possible at the site.

4.3 - Riparian Buffer Standards

The ~~minimum width for planning and implementing the~~ **Riparian Forest Buffer** practice, NRCS practice number 391, **must be planned to the NRCS standard of a minimum of 50 feet for at least 70% of the stream length in the planning unit. is 50 feet to improve habitat where salmon are present.** Applicants are encouraged to consider the functions of the riparian management zone and plan projects to the width that will achieve the greatest riparian functional benefit possible. Consider the 200-year site-potential tree height (SPTH) for the location during project planning.

4.4 - The **Hedgerow** practice, NRCS practice number 422, is eligible on streams with a bankfull width less than 5 feet or on ditches and conveyances modified for agricultural use and less than 15 feet wide. The minimum planting width eligible for the hedgerow practice is 35 feet to treat a water quality resource concern where no salmon are present. Where salmon are present, the hedgerow must be installed to 50'.

4.5 - **Riparian Herbaceous Cover** practice, NRCS practice number 390, **or Filter Strip, practice 393,** may be used where easements prevent the establishment of woody vegetation **or in areas where trees and shrubssite conditions are not native riparian vegetationsuitable for trees and shrubs to achieve the desired buffer width in the critical riparian management zone, such as native herbaceous dominated ecosystems. , such as dryland ecosystems.** The minimum planning width for ~~Riparian Herbaceous Cover~~ is 35 feet.

4.6 - WDFW's **Statewide Integrated Fish Distribution** map will be used to determine salmon presence. Salmon are present if the map indicates species as "Documented" or "Presumed".

4.6 - Exceptions to the minimum buffer width will be considered if physical or legal barriers limit the full application of the Riparian Forest Buffer, Hedgerow or Riparian Herbaceous Cover practice. Examples include:

- **property lines,**
- **easements,**
- **structures,**
- **utilities,**
- **topography,**
- **hydrology, such as natural steep slopes that create narrow riparian corridors,**
- **cultural resource protection requirements that restrict ground disturbance.**

Exceptions to this minimum must be clearly explained in the project application, **including how the planting project still achieves the goal of restoring riparian function (i.e., continuity, shade, pollution removal, contributions of detrital nutrients, recruitment of large woody materials, and bank stability, etc.).**

4.7 - The Tree/Shrub Establishment practice is to be applied as a maintenance practice related to supplemental planting of an on-going riparian restoration project.

4.8 - Native vegetation is preferred however, climate adapted species (not invasive/noxious weeds) are allowable. [The Washington Native Plant Society Native Plant Directory is a good resource for native plant determination.](#)

4.9 - Additional practices may be considered on a case-by-case basis if they can be demonstrated to provide direct benefit to **critical** riparian management zone restoration. [Specific questions about eligible best management practice standards and specifications should be directed to the program manager after USDA - NRCS technical guidance materials have been thoroughly reviewed.](#)

4.10 - Table 1. Eligible Best Management Practices

BMP Name	NRCS Practice Code
Access Control	472
Access Road (access to RMZ and/or stream crossing) ¹	560
<u>Aquatic Organism Passage</u> ^{1, 5}	<u>396</u>
Bank Barb ¹	SCC53
Bank Reshaping/Channel Modification ¹	SCC48
Beaver Dam Analogue (BDA)	SCC3
Brush Management	314
Brush Mattress	SCC57
Conservation Cover	327
Critical Area Planting	342
Dead Stake Revetments	SCC55
Dynamic Revetments	SCC46
Fence (including livestock exclusion and old fence removal)	382
<u>Filter Strip</u>	<u>393</u>
Grade Stabilization Structure ¹	410
Hedgerow Planting	422
Herbaceous Weed Control	315
Herbivory Control	SCC12
Live Stake Revetments	SCC54
Livestock Pipeline	516
LWD Structure ¹	SCC26
Micro-irrigation	441
Mulching	484
Multi-story Cropping	379
Obstruction Removal	500
Post Assisted Log Structures (PALS)	SCC3
*Pumping Plant ²	533
**Riparian Herbaceous Cover ³	390
Riparian Forest Buffer	391
Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment	654
Rock Toe Protection ¹	SCC56
Root Wads ¹	SCC45
Spring Development	442
Stream Crossing	578
<u>Stream Habitat Improvement</u>	<u>395</u>
Structures for Wildlife	649
Tree/Shrub Establishment (<u>maintenance activity only</u>)	612
Tree/Shrub Site Prep	490
***Water Well ⁴	642

Watering Facility	614
Wetland Enhancement	659
Wetland Restoration	657

Table 1. Notes

1. Engineering is required for these practices.

4.11 - *2. Pumping plant practice is eligible for livestock watering facilities and riparian irrigation.

4.12 - **3. The riparian herbaceous cover practice is conditionally eligible in the event that establishment of a Riparian Forest Buffer is impractical or in violation of easement terms in certain geographic areas.

4.13 ***4. The water well practice does not include domestic or drinking water wells. New wells for riparian planting irrigation are not eligible, but improvements to existing wells may be funded. See the NRCS practice specification for more detail.

5. Only passage barrier removal and restoration is eligible for the Aquatic Organism Passage practice for the riparian grant program.

5 - Project Prioritization

All projects must ~~lead to be located within~~ improved functions within ~~ef the a critical~~ riparian management zones (RMZ). Instream projects must be conducted in direct support of a riparian restoration project. See Definitions section for definitions of the terms **critical riparian management zone**, **riparian ecosystem**, and **instream** projects. ~~The funding provide included specific language pertaining to prioritization:~~

~~5.1 - (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.~~

5.2 - SCC reviews project applications monthly and prepares awards for qualifying projects. Qualifying projects are those that meet the eligibility requirements in these guidelines.

In the case that funding becomes limited, SCC will develop a scoring system to fund the highest priority of competing project applications. SCC may prioritize best management practices that directly result in critical riparian management zone restoration.

5.3 - Projects meeting one or more of the following criteria will be prioritized for funding:

- ~~Preference for p~~Projects that are included or referenced in, in no particular order or priority as the existence of these references vary across the state:
 - Watershed plan developed pursuant to RCW 90.82 (Watershed or Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) Planning). See more information [here](#).
 - Regional salmon recovery plans created under RCW 77.85.090. See more information [here](#).
 - The Puget Sound Action Agenda developed under RCW 90.71.260. See more information [here](#).
 - The habitat project lists developed pursuant to RCW 77.85.050: [Salmon Recovery and Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration](#). More information [here](#).
 - The prioritization process developed under RCW 27 77.95.160: [the Fish Passage Barrier Removal Board](#). More information [here](#).

- Priority projects identified for salmon recovery through agency grant programs such as Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) or Department of Ecology grant programs.
- Other local salmon habitat or riparian restoration strategies.
- ~~5.4 - Preference for p~~Projects that are locally prioritized through coordination with local federally recognized Tribes, private landowners, conservation districts, the local county, WDFW, and ECY, e.g., a Local Integrating Organization (LIO).

5.5 - Additional Proposal Evaluation Criteria

- Proposals that include written support from one or more Tribes will be prioritized.
- Projects that address environmental justice or emphasize benefit to, support by and/or participation by under-served, vulnerable, or over-burdened populations will be prioritized. See SCC's [Community Engagement Plan](#) for term definitions. [The Office of Financial Management provides guidance and a mapping tool to identify overburdened communities in relation to Climate Commitment Act requirements.](#)
- ~~5.6 - Districts are strongly encouraged to geographically group parcels, landowners, and practices together. This targeted approach of clustering projects on multiple parcels or with multiple landowners in one concentrated area allows for more effective and efficient use of funding.~~
- Located adjacent to or within the same watershed as other project(s) funded by SCC or through other conservation programs/funding.
- Projects that group work on multiple adjoining parcels or with multiple landowners together into a larger contiguous project.
- Located in areas with identified pollution inputs with particular focus on areas with 303(d) listing for temperature or dissolved oxygen, or projects implementing an Ecology TMDL implementation plan.

~~6-~~

Tiered Incentives section is removed from this version of the guidelines for further development.

76 - Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Annual project site monitoring, at a minimum, must be conducted by conservation districts on all **riparian management zone** restoration projects installed with this program, for the life of the cost-share contract **or**, District Implemented Landowner Agreement, **or Tiered Incentives Agreement** whichever is longest.

This annual site monitoring ensures accountability for the public funds invested, serves to identify emergent issues quickly so action may be taken (e.g., human or herbivory activity, invasive weeds etc.), and may help inform the SCC of any programmatic barriers or challenges that arise especially pertaining to maintenance. Conservation districts are encouraged to seek out opportunities for co-existence with beaver, where possible and practical, for the ecosystem benefits they provide.

Annual project monitoring will also inform any future program modifications made as part of adaptive management. **Ongoing monitoring activity beyond initial biennium funding is dependent on funding availability.** SCC will provide a worksheet for use on annual monitoring site visits to gather pertinent information across projects statewide to evaluate **critical** riparian management zone restoration progress.

Additionally, SCC staff will conduct a technical on-site project review with conservation districts every five years from the date of project installation, or earlier if conditions warrant, on a cross-selection of completed projects, to further evaluate riparian restoration and maintenance technique effectiveness and identify any technical challenges to be addressed.

Prior to the start of each new biennium, program guidelines will be reviewed to address appropriate questions, concerns, or issues that have arisen in the prior biennium's implementation. Additionally, conservation district program practitioners, state agency partners, and the SCC will convene a meeting at least once per biennium to discuss topics and challenges of mutual interest pertaining to riparian restoration. This meeting may occur as a portion of another scheduled event or symposium for efficiencies in time and costs.

87 - Definitions

Artificial conveyance³: Human-made pathways constructed to convey water such as for irrigation or drainage.

Landowner implemented cost-share project: Funding used to reimburse participants for a percentage of the costs associated with the implementation of best management practices. Examples of costs include, but are not limited to labor, materials, and permits. These projects are implemented/constructed by the landowner who then seeks reimbursement from a conservation district for a portion of the project costs.

Critical riparian management zone¹: 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.

District Implemented Project (DIP): A project where the conservation district is the lead planner and implementer. In this project type, the district is taking full responsibility for the installation/construction of the project which may include, but is not limited to acquiring permits, bidding, and purchasing processes, and prevailing wage requirements. A District Implemented Project must not include cost-sharing or cash reimbursement, to a landowner(s) with SCC funds. The district is assuming all responsibility for project planning and construction directly.

Critical Riparian management zone²: 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.

Ephemeral (rain-dependent) stream³: Flow only after precipitation. Runoff from rainfall is the primary source of water for these streams. Like seasonal streams, they can be found anywhere but are most prevalent in arid areas.

Instream habitat improvement³: 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 structures⁴.

Intermittent (seasonal) stream³: Flow during certain times of the year when smaller upstream waters are flowing and when groundwater provides enough water for stream flow. Runoff from rainfall or other precipitation supplements the flow of seasonal stream. During dry periods, seasonal streams may not have flowing surface water. Larger seasonal streams are more common in dry areas.

Landowner implemented cost-share project: Funding used to reimburse participants for a percentage of the costs associated with the implementation of best management practices. Examples of costs include, but are not limited to labor, materials, and permits. These projects are implemented/constructed by the landowner who then seeks reimbursement from a conservation district for a portion of the project costs.

¹ See Riparian Grant Program Budget **Proviso**

² See Riparian Grant Program Budget **Proviso**

³ 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

⁴ 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.

Perennial stream⁵: Typically have water flowing in them year-round. Most of the water comes from smaller upstream waters or groundwater while runoff from rainfall or other precipitation is supplemental.

Practice: Approved practice per current Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) practices available in Washington, or Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) approved practices or Licensed Engineer approved practices.

Intermittent (seasonal) stream³: Flow during certain times of the year when smaller upstream waters are flowing and when groundwater provides enough water for stream flow. Runoff from rainfall or other precipitation supplements the flow of seasonal stream. During dry periods, seasonal streams may not have flowing surface water. Larger seasonal streams are more common in dry areas.

Ephemeral (rain-dependent) stream³: Flow only after precipitation. Runoff from rainfall is the primary source of water for these streams. Like seasonal streams, they can be found anywhere but are most prevalent in arid areas.

Artificial conveyance³: Human-made pathways constructed to convey water such as for irrigation or drainage.

Instream habitat improvement⁶: 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 structures⁷.

Practice: Approved practice per current Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) practices available in Washington, or Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) approved practices or Licensed Engineer approved practices.

Riparian ecosystem⁸: 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

⁵ <https://www.epa.gov/cwa-404/streams-under-cwa-section-404>

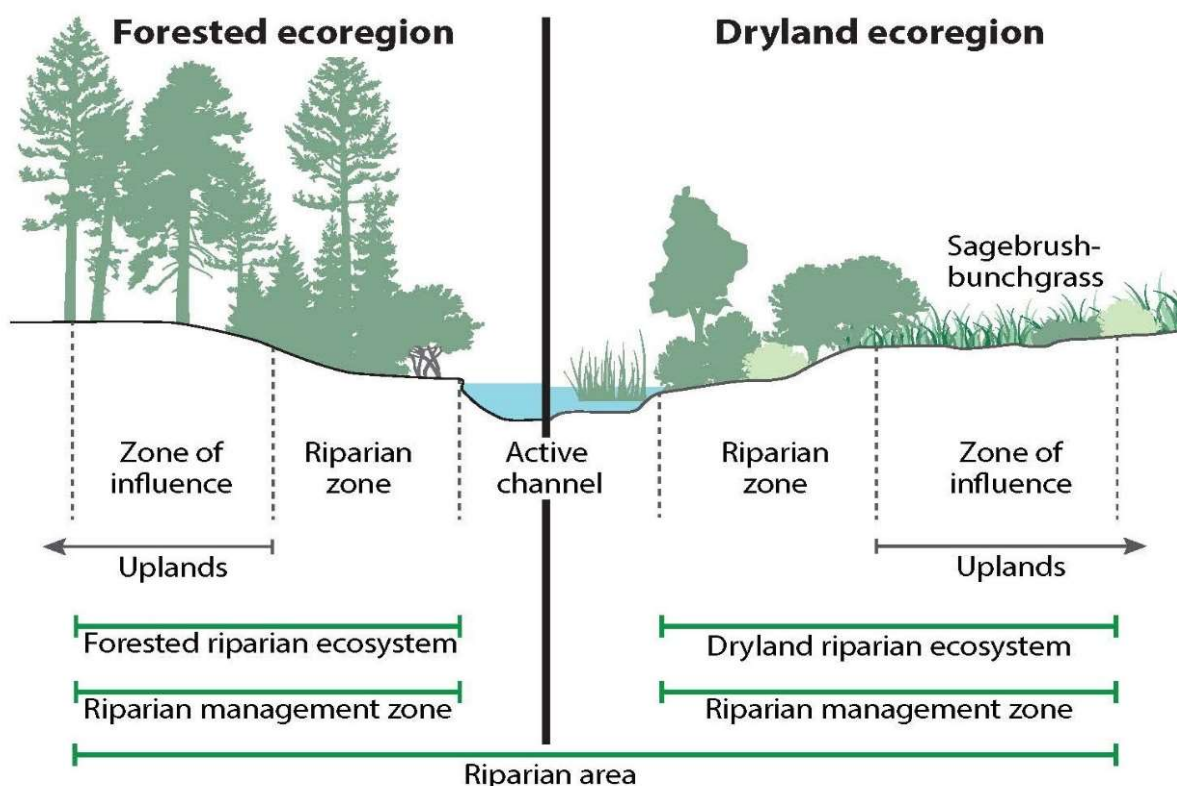
⁶ Krall, M., C. Clark, P. Roni, K. Ross. 2019. Lessons Learned from Long-Term Effectiveness Monitoring of Instream Habitat Projects. North American Journal of Fisheries Management 39:1395-1411, 2019

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

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 critical riparian management zone projects are those in the area described above and pictured below and are intended to address ecosystem attributes particularly important to salmonid needs. Also, re-vegetating floodplain areas adjacent or in proximity to riparian zones is conditionally eligible if sufficient justification for salmon habitat is included in a proposal.



⁹This diagram depicts the riparian management zone (RMZ) for both forested (left) and dryland (right) ecoregions. The RMZ is coincident with the riparian ecosystem, which consists of the riparian zone (riparian vegetative community) and the zone of influence. The riparian zone extends from the edge of the active channel towards the uplands and includes areas where vegetation is influenced at least periodically by flowing waters. The zone of influence includes areas where ecological processes significantly influence the stream, at least periodically.

⁹ Windrope, A., Rentz, T., Folkerts, K. and Azerrad, J. 2020. Riparian Ecosystems, Volume 2: Management Recommendations. Habitat Program, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Olympia. p.21

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.

98 - 2025-2027 Budget Proviso

Insert when final Riparian Grant Program proviso language in SSB 5105

NEW SECTION. Sec. 3081. FOR THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

2025-2027 Voluntary Riparian Grant Program (40000049)

The appropriations in this section are subject to the following conditions and limitations:

(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) 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 77.85.090; the habitat project lists developed pursuant to RCW 77.85.050; the prioritization process developed

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

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

(a) Consistency with the program criteria established under subsection (2) of this section;

(b) Tiered incentive rates tied to improving functionality for riparian areas; and

(c) Other requirements as determined by the commission.

(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

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(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.

(13) The state building construction account—state appropriation in this section is subject to the provisions of section 8018 of this act.



Washington State Conservation Commission

June 18, 2025

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Chief Financial Officer
Shana Joy, Deputy Director of Operations and Programs

SUBJECT: Approve Grant and Contract Policy & Procedure Manual

Action Item

X

Informational Item

Summary:

Over the last year SCC staff shared updates to Commissioners about the process to update our Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual ("manual"). SCC deployed a dual approach to solicit comprehensive feedback on the manual. This approach included an internal review team with a representative from each agency function and an external process to engage with conservation districts.

Over the course of seven meetings in 2024/2025, regional managers, fiscal staff, program managers, and policy staff reviewed each section of the manual and discussed proposed changes. Additionally, deep dive conversations were held with staff across agency functions on more complex questions. As this document touches on all aspects of SCC's work, updating it is an agency-wide effort.

SCC surveyed conservation districts to gather feedback directly from manual users. SCC received 20 responses to that survey. SCC staff used the survey results to guide the work of the ombuds group made up of 10 district representatives, WACD, and SCC staff (Regional Managers, Policy Director, Executive Director, Grants Manager and Chief Financial Officer), and a third-party facilitator. SCC held one ombuds meeting and has incorporated several recommendations that came from that meeting into this proposed update.

At the March 2025 the Commission Meeting the Commission approved the Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedures Manual to go out for the 45-day review and public comment.

SCC received one comment from SCC staff and seven comments from conservation districts. However at the May 8, 2025, Conservation District Roundtable meeting several more conservation districts expressed broad support of the seven comments we received, stating that while we received seven comments, the larger district community supported the comments that were submitted.

The packet contains the following:

- Roll up of all comments and replies to each comment can be found at this link [here](#).
- Original Formstack comment submissions
- Report from ombuds group facilitator, including notes from the meeting.
- Redline version and final cleaned version of the manual (*changes made based on comments are identified in the attached redline version with yellow highlight, we are still working on formatting the final document, but no additional changes will be made beyond formatting from the attached redline and highlighted document*)

SCC recognizes there are still opportunities to improve the manual. Areas for future work include:

- Reorganizing and reformatting the content
- Separating agency policy from procedure from best practice
- Reviewing and aligning different terms used throughout the manual
- Reviewing advance payment policies and potentially expanding eligibility
- Aligning programmatic guidelines with the manual when/where applicable

Once this is approved and the biennium is closed out, SCC will reconvene the ombuds group to reassess and prioritize the outstanding issues and will start working on the next round of updates to take effect in the future.

Requested Action:

Approve the updated Grant and Contract Policy & Procedure Manual with an effective date of July 1, 2025.

Staff Contact:

Sarah Groth, sgroth@scc.wa.gov

Shana Joy, sjoy@scc.wa.gov

First Name	Karen Hills
Email	khills@scc.wa.gov
Who are you affiliated with?	SCC
Employment Type	SCC Staff
Section 5: Special Grant Program Comments	<p>There's some opportunity to align the program descriptions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Some cite the applicable RCW while most don't.2. Some give dates of program establishment while most don't.3. Irrigation Efficiencies guidelines (should this say "programmatic guidelines") to be consistent with how others are listed?4. The heading for "Livestock" seems like it should say "Livestock Technical Assistance" to be consistent with how the programmatic guideline link is labeled.
Section 9: District Implemented Projects	<p>Under the heading "eligible practice types", the link for SCC-approved program specific practices needs to be updated to the latest version of the CPDS cheat sheet.</p>
Overall Comments and Feedback	<p>Thank you for all the work on this!</p>

First Name	Ryan Williams
Email	ryanw@cascadiacd.org
Who are you affiliated with?	Cascadia Conservation District
Employment Type	District Manager

Section 1: General Information Comments	<p>Is this manual used for contractors too? If so, suggest making sure the "Districts and Counties Must Pay First" title is generalized to something like "entities" to make it neutral to type.</p> <p>In this manual there are a mixture of terms: Costs, Expenditures and Expenses. The definition for expenses appears to be focused on accrual-based accounting. Expenses, as defined in the glossary, would also never be reported to SCC and would only appear in a District's accounts payable. Expenditures, as defined in the glossary, are the primary item that would appear in any payment request. A specific example is on Page 13, "Prior Authorization for Grants" under the 2nd bullet in the second paragraph the sentence says: "Expenses claimed under the prior authorization must be supported by documentation of staff time and proof of expenses incurred and submitted to SCC with the first reimbursement request under the grant." In the case of the glossary definition of expenses we would not be submitting any expenses until they became an expenditure. I recommend updating expenses to expenditures. This would be consistent with how CDs operate and what SCC would see.</p> <p>Program Codes: Can we work on reclassifying them so they are more unique? Need to update list too. RPP, RP, RGP are too close. Suggest a linked document with the program code list with descriptions of each program.</p>
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Section 2: Grants and Contracts
Comments

Thank you for accepting electronic signatures on the master contract. Will SCC accept electronic signatures on the authorized signature form?

Grants and Contracts: Update the first sentence in section to remove "both". There are three items in that sentence.

Debarment and Suspension: "Must PRINT" please update to "maintain an electronic record". We do not print but we do PDF the results and save them in the electronic file. Print implies a paper copy.

Section 3: Compliance Comments

Vouchering: Paragraph 2. Language is a little confusing still. Recommend separating it into 2 paragraphs. The first about when a voucher is due, something like "Vouchers each month are due on the 20th day of the following month" Then a second paragraph "Expenditures reported in any month must be vouchered within 60 days and could be reported on any month that falls within that period" With them together they almost contradict each other.

Vouchering: it is unclear how the July 10 deadline is applied for biennium programs. As far as the manual says, July 10 is the due date for all vouchers regardless of it being operating or capital.

With biennium funded projects, would the 60 day expenditure window apply?

Would an action that occurred in June, and became an expenditure in July be eligible for reimbursement with a biennium project?

Sentence that starts with Exceptions.... (capitalize exceptions). Update to say, "Any expenditures that fall outside of this criteria may be approved on a case-by-case basis." Please add language either here or in it's own section about the process to request an exception.

Timing of Expenditures: Basis of accounting section is confusing. Open periods only apply in a 13 month scenario which for a county is January. It wouldn't impact state fiscal year funding. This is also an extremely rare or non-existent scenario for conservation districts. Suggest you remove the section about open periods and just reference that there may be special conditions for entities who use counties are their treasurer.

Travel vouchers: travel-related expenditures vouchers after it has commenced (started) or after it has been completed? What about travel that crosses months (leave on the 31st and continue traveling in the next month)? Can we combine 2 months of travel onto one reimbursement form?

Thank you for removing the no activity requirement

Section 4: Reimbursable Expenses Comments

Staff or Expenditures shared between two conservation districts: would this apply to services provided between districts, i.e. cultural resources? Does Cascadia CD need to provide all 36 interagency services agreements to SCC at the beginning of the biennium?

Must the agreements be one-way? What if two districts share staff and sometimes District A pays for Staff A from District B, but then District B pays for Staff B from District A. In this case neither are primary. Wouldn't the invoices cover the documentation of which way the money is flowing?

Out of State/Country Travel: Will SCC fiscal staff be responsible for communicating the appropriate Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner rates for the travel destination? Federal Per Diem includes a \$5 incidentals element that Washington State splits between the three meals. This is where most of the errors occur and could use either a general rule of thumb (i.e. \$1 to breakfast, \$2 to Lunch and Dinner) or direct guidance from SCC Finance staff before travel occurs.

Meal Per Diem Reimbursement: What about Americorps? They act as staff but are contracted staff. What about 1099 contract employees? Also serving as staff but may not be on a W2 payroll.

Not allowing contractors to collect per diem for travel is a burden to communities that do not have robust contracting firms. We bring in experts for design purposes and they may need to travel in for a few days to collect field data, why are they not allowed to be reimbursed for travel costs? This would severely limit our ability to implement projects if we have to limit contractor's ability to recover their costs.

Same comment on expenditures vs expenses. Both show up throughout the manual, please update to make it consistently the same thing.

Ineligible Expenditures:

Foreign transaction fees: in cases where the only high quality option for a small tool is located in Canada, we cannot bill that cost to the grant? Prime example is that Forestry Suppliers Archaeologist Screens fall apart almost immediately. There is a company in BC that sells high quality ones, no other real suppliers in the US, but there is a foreign transaction fee when purchasing from them.

Meals with Meetings: Are specifically allowed in the SAAM manual, which is referenced in the Goods and services section of this

document. Section 70.15 sets conditions where meals with meetings can be reimbursed. There are no legal restrictions on CDs to have meals with meetings with regards to training, and meetings that are integral to a business purpose meeting. MRSC has a link to a 1987 Attorney General's office memo on it, and it does not limit us.

<https://mrsc.org/getmedia/7c69510c-5971-4f29-ab0e-9056793a3390/w3ag051487.pdf> It must be justified, in a similar manner as our light refreshments form, which does include meals on it. I would like the justification for this limitation within our grants manual. I understand that capital grants might be more limited in this regard, but operating does not have the same restrictions.

Mortgage Payments: Why is this not eligible but leases are?
Mortgage payments for buildings owned by Districts apply equally to all programs like leases.

Speaker Fees: Why are speaker fees specifically excluded?
Speakers can be sources of producer education around program topics. They can also be a draw to get more attendance and more reach. At the minimum this expense should be conditionally allowed. The definition of speaker in the glossary talks about them as a very positive thing, but are specifically excluded here.

Tuition: Where is the line determining tuition vs training and education? Would a fee for a class put on by WSU Extension be considered tuition? Is it more than one class in a series?
Dictionary definition is: a sum of money charged for teaching or instruction by a school, college, or university. There are several really good certificate programs that provide excellent training on riparian, forestry, and others that would greatly benefit WSCC programs that would be excluded. Would you consider the AgForestry Leadership program tuition?

Allowable expenses: Suggest putting the meaning of the asterisk at the top of the section, not the bottom. OR creating a table/section that is CD only so that other entities can ignore the section.

Fuel Consumed: Does this definition include the cost of small engine fuel such as brushcutters, chainsaws, etc.?

Rental of office space: Please refer to my mortgage payment question. Why is rental OK but not mortgage. Also, the stipulation on not exceeding the cost of similar facilities would be impossible to enforce or check. It is almost impossible to compare two rental locations and the cost at the beginning of the lease might be comparable but the terms might cause it to exceed another location. Will the Commission force a CD to move their office by

disallowing rental costs that are deemed "too expensive" compared to a building down the street?

Utilities: Do we need to call out all specific utilities or can it be a more general definition with a "such as" using the examples in here. There may be a specific utility that may not fit these exact criteria.

Conditionally eligible expenditures

Construction costs: This is a very confusing expenditure description. There are no construction costs listed as "allowable" or "ineligible". Stating "Construction costs not otherwise allowable" doesn't make sense. Are you referring to cost share? DIP funding? Building a building? Hard to provide a clear suggestion to improve this language when it isn't clear what this applies to.

Sponsorships: Can likely remove the last sentence. An additional funding source would not relate back to the capital funded grant and would follow that specific funding source's rules. i.e. We have a riparian grant program that includes the potential for sponsorship but bring in Ecology to fund the sponsorship, SCC would not be involved in the decision whether the sponsorship was eligible. Or is this saying that if you can get a second sponsor that the expense would then be eligible under the program?

Clothing/apparel: Can this be moved up to an allowable expense with a more comprehensive definition of "promotion purposes". My guess is that apparel cannot be purchased if we are giving it away at events. But if we purchase clothes for staff that will not be given away we should be able to make the purchase without additional approvals. What criteria would SCC staff utilize to deny this purchase? If the criteria is whether the grant program itself would allow it, there are many operation/IM only items that are in the allowable section that do not require pre-approval.

Direct Costs: This definition should be at the start of this section, not the end. Ideally there would be a big heading called "Direct Costs" which includes this definition and all of the content in this section. Followed by a big heading that says "Indirect Costs" which includes the overhead calculation content.

Employee Composite Rates: It should be near the top as this is the number one expense for programs.

Handling Reimbursement for Employer-Paid Benefits: My interpretation of this is that we will be required to hold a second account to house leave balances. This is not required by the state

auditor and is not enforceable by the SCC. We are required to track leave balances and report them as liabilities and are expected to cover those liabilities when they are used but there are no requirements as to how we are supposed to manage those funds. Are SCC financial staff reviewing that all CDs, Counties and contractors adhere to this method? how are you going to enforce this on a contractor or a county?

**Section 5: Special Grant Program
Comments**

Task Order and Work Order: Suggest updating timelines to reflect that each task order has it's own deadlines for work completed.

**Section 6: Getting Paid
Comments**

Composite Rate Forms: Update to remove the January requirement to match language in Section 4. Also suggest changing it to say "A new form is required under any of the following:" and adding a "or other changes to benefit costs that necessitate a rate change"

All reference to the changes to vouchering was removed in the redlined version. Does the updated process need to be in this chapter too?

Voucher Support Form - Detail and summary page: Posing this question back to WSCC finance staff - are there any common issues that could be addressed in this format to speed up processing? Consistent naming conventions, formatting, etc.? re-ordering columns?

**Section 7: Conservation District
Advance/Initial Payments
Comments**

Is it possible to add large equipment purchases to the advance policy? If the CD uses program funding to purchase an expensive piece of equipment, having an advance would help with cash flow or eliminate the need for a line of credit.

Section 8: Cost Share Comments

A missing element in the manual is incentive payments. For some specific types of projects the formal cost share process is a burden. It is virtually the same administrative cost to provide cost share on \$800 and \$80,000. Ideally we would be able to do some verification of implementation and send a check without collecting receipts, etc. We would have to follow rules around issuing 1099s in that case. This is a longer term goal that I would like to fully explore.

Approved Practice Types

□Is there a provision about non-engineering practices that may be approved? Some elements do not require an engineer but could be outside of the NRCS BMP list, either too young to be adopted or something NRCS doesn't typically do.

Cultural Resources: Suggest rewording the "Cultural Resources work must be done...." To "A review for cultural resources requirements must be completed before implementation may begin. For potentially ground disturbing activities (list can be found here), an archaeologist must be consulted and a cultural resource complied statement (and all of the required consultation) must be completed before implementation can begin." Not all work will require cultural resources "work" which I take to mean survey. I think it makes sense to outline the process required. Step 1 - review practice list to determine ground disturbing potential. Step 2 - if not disturbing, complete CR complied statement and move on. If it is ground disturbing, consult with an archaeologist to see if full consultation is necessary. Step 3 - start consultation process with first 30 days. Step 4 - IF necessary, complete survey and finish second 30 day consultation. Step 5 - completed CR complied statement.

Labor Rate: Is the labor rate not being updated for 2025-27? The value of volunteer time determined by an independent organization has determined that volunteer labor is currently worth \$34.79. Value of Volunteer Time - Independent Sector The value of labor has gone up regardless and should increase. Another suggestion is a CPI adjusted rate that is updated annually. Is it possible for a district to exceed the \$25 rate in policy? If so, please add that option to the manual.

Same comment as an above section: Are we required to print the SAM report? Can we save it as a PDF and put it in our electronic files?

The restriction of cost share on federal lands only shows up in the Q&A. The "publicly-owned property eligibility" section clearly lists Federal as one possible ownership type but does not restrict it. Is there a legal restriction of state funds being used to pay the feds

directly?

Methods of Payment states that CDs must pay participants directly, please add language that an exception is made if assignment of payment is utilized.

Section 9: District Implemented Projects

Cultural Resources: Suggest rewording the "Cultural Resources work must be done..." To "A review for cultural resources requirements must be completed before implementation may begin. For potentially ground disturbing activities (list can be found here), an archaeologist must be consulted and a cultural resource complied statement (and all of the required consultation) must be completed before implementation can begin." Not all work will require cultural resources "work" which I take to mean survey. I think it makes sense to outline the process required. Step 1 - review practice list to determine ground disturbing potential. Step 2 - if not disturbing, complete CR complied statement and move on. If it is ground disturbing, consult with an archaeologist to see if full consultation is necessary. Step 3 - start consultation process with first 30 days. Step 4 - IF necessary, complete survey and finish second 30 day consultation. Step 5 - completed CR complied statement.

Section 10: Other Requirements Comments

Audit Findings or Management Letter : I am not sure what this section is trying to communicate except that audit findings must be communicated with your regional manager. CDs are already sending all of their monthly payment requests with full backup to SCC, and according to record retention requirements they are required to keep the documentation for 6 years after the grant ends. By default SCC financial staff are always reviewing every month's payment requests. Is there a scenario where they aren't? Please clarify what SCC financial staff may do after an audit finding.

Grant and Compliance Oversight: SCC always requests all backup documentation for each billing. This paragraph is communicating that we don't have to send everything? What documents are you not requesting that this section would impact?

Section 11: Glossary Comments

BARS manual is in the glossary twice

Expenses and Expenditures are used throughout the document. The definition for expenses appears to be focused on accrual-based accounting. Expenses, under this definition, would also never be reported to SCC and would only appear in a District's accounts payable. Expenditures, as defined in the glossary, are the primary item that would appear in any payment request. A specific example is on Page 13, "Prior Authorization for Grants" under the 2nd bullet in the second paragraph the sentence says: "Expenses claimed under the prior authorization must be supported by documentation of staff time and proof of expenses incurred and submitted to SCC with the first reimbursement request under the grant." In the case of the glossary definition of expenses we would not be submitting any expenses until they became an expenditure. I recommend updating expenses to expenditures. This would be consistent with how CDs operate and what SCC would receive in a payment request.

Subscriptions in the glossary does not match the definition in the "allowable expenses" section. The glossary refers to newspapers, etc. and allowable expenses focuses on software. It should be both.

The following items only exist within the glossary and are not mentioned in the document:

GAAP, Governmental Funds, Packing Slip, Privately Owned Vehicles, Purchase Card, Request for Proposals, Request for Applications, Sales Receipt

You can remove the page that is meant for notes from the manual. I dont think it is used.

Overall Comments and Feedback

The changes identified in this update do not fully address the ongoing concerns that Districts were encountering in the last biennium. A few factors that are missing include:

Mention of multi-biennium contracts that were proposed at the March 2025 commission meeting. I suggest adding a paragraph about this in section 2.

AND Mechanisms to empower Districts to make informed decisions about conditionally allowable expenses and reduce the amount of approvals necessary by program and financial staff. The goal of any administrative rule should be to maximize good use of funds while minimizing administrative costs for both the grantor and grantee. Many of the changes in this manual are to tighten down requirements and push CDs to ask for permission from SCC staff more often. The manual should be clear enough that a District can make an appropriate decision without SCC staff input.

There are also elements within this manual that are better fit in a Conservation District Governance document such as a more detailed CAPP 1. There are many sections in here that only apply to CDs and would not apply to any of the other types of groups that utilize commission funds. In a future update I suggest reworking this manual to make it entity neutral. This should be focused on how recipient of WSCC funding should manage their contract, not their organization. For most CDs, WSCC is not the only funding source and we are subject to many laws and are consistently audited on them that make the guidance in this document unnecessary.

Lastly, as was mentioned in the ombudsman meeting and the March 2025 WSCC meeting, this manual needs to be pulled apart, reorganized and put back together again. It should be updated such that a newly hired finance person could read the manual and successfully be able to document and request payment. Right now, essential elements that need to be known up front end up at the end of a section or too many chapters down the line.

I look forward to participating in future rounds of updates.

First Name	Josh giuntoli
Email	jgiuntoli@scc.wa.gov
Who are you affiliated with?	jefferson county CD
Employment Type	Other

Section 1: General Information Comments	<p>1.□About the Washington State Conservation Commission; a.□First paragraph; last sentence; ...entities, and cooperators and landowners to solve address natural resource issues. i.□GRAMMATICAL - Change from solve to address NR issues</p> <p>2.□About SCC a.□First paragraph; last sentence; ...ensure healthy natural resources and agriculture for all. i.□COMMENT - more than just agriculture</p> <p>3.□Important Things to Know - reimbursement help a.□Last sentence; and all other forms can be found here i.□COMMENT - where is here</p> <p>4.□Districts and Counties must pay first a.□First paragraph; second sentence. i.□GRAMMATICAL - add contractors, cooperators, after paying employees and before vendors b.□Middle of paragraph - SCC will pay only for allowable costs. A cost...under the grant program i.□GRAMMATICAL - adds a period to break up sentence. Begins a new sentence, changes in the grant program to under the grant program</p> <p>5.□Payment of allowable costs a.□GRAMMATICAL -suggest change from allowable in the grant program to under the grant program b.□COMMENT - review for repeated sentences in this sub-section.</p> <p>6.□Reimbursement is limited to allowable expenditures a.□COMMENT - Last sentence - add after reimbursement "by the SCC".</p> <p>7.□Grant or Contract Number and Type a.□COMMENT - ...the next two, and a two or three letter... Add "or three" b.□COMMENT - The following is a list of potential program identifiers. Suggest change from potential to current program identifiers.</p>
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Section 2: Grants and Contracts

Comments

- 1.□Prior authorization for grants
 - a.□First paragraph - SCC's executive director or designee would may grant such an approval. Work can start once SCC gives written prior authorization. However, prior Prior authorization does not guarantee award of a grant. But it does make such allowable costs reimbursable if the grant is awarded.
 - i.□GRAMMATICAL - suggest two grammatical edits
 - b.□Second paragraph - third bullet
 - i.□GRAMMATICAL - suggest striking allowable and replacing with eligible; suggests striking Such with any.
 - c.□Second paragraph - fifth bullet
 - i.□GRAMMATICAL - suggest striking under each separate and replacing with depending on the
 - 2.□Amendments to all contracts
 - a.□Third bullet - Whenever the expiration date is extended.
 - i.□GRAMMATICAL - Suggest changing to Extension of the grant of contract expiration date.
 - 3.□Budget Revision
 - a.□First paragraph - makes grammatical/structure changes
 - i.□GRAMMATICAL - Suggests striking submit and beginning a new sentence to read A Budget Revision form must be submitted to SCC.
 - ii.□GRAMMATICAL - last sentence - suggest modifying to read If a budget revision is approved, the district or entity grant or contract recipient will receive a copy of the amendment documenting the change.
 - b.□Second paragraph
 - i.□GRAMMATICAL - suggest modifying sentence to ... allowable depending on the conditions...
 - 4.□Termination and Suspension
 - a.□First bullet - GRAMMATICAL suggest adding pending after project funds
 - b.□Top of page 15 - GRAMMITICAL - Change conservation district to grant or contract recipient
 - c.□GRAMMATICAL - change from master contract to master agreement
 - d.□GRAMMATICAL - change from not allowable to eligible for reimbursement
-

Section 3: Compliance Comments

1. Vouchering
 - a. Fourth paragraph
 - i. GRAMMATICAL - change from contracts which to contracts whereby
 2. Timing of Expenditures
 - a. Related to full text from BARS manual 3.1.7.40
 - b. COMMENT - Does this apply to any districts? If not maybe reconsider working to avoid confusion.
 3. Credit Cards, Electronic Fund Transfers (EFT) and Purchase Accounts
 - a. QUESTION - Is the account statement also required to be submitted?
 4. Travel vouchers
 - a. GRAMMATICAL - first sentences - is it commenced or concluded.
 5. Fiscal Year End
 - a. Third paragraph
 - b. QUESTION - why is DIP struck?
 6. Final Report
 - a. COMMENT - This sounds pretty onerous if it wasn't part of the contract. Based on how I read this, a final report could be requested at the end of the grant with only ten days after it ends to prepare and submit it.
 7. Close out process
 - a. Fourth bullet
 - b. QUESTION - regarding final reports, final reports may include final reports?
-

Section 4: Reimbursable Expenses Comments

1. □ Staff or expenditures shared between two CDs
 - a. □ First paragraph - Sentence beginning The agreement...COMMENT - consider adding secondary before CD for staff services.
 - b. □ COMMENT - for the bulleted list, consider putting this into a table.
 - c. □ Last paragraph - GRAMMATICAL - modify to ... invoices or timesheets and totaled by...
2. □ Payroll
 - a. □ QUESTION - related to the comp rate form required in January, I thought this was changed to only if the rate changes.
3. □ Meal Per Diem
 - a. □ GRAMMATICAL - consider adding after associate board members, VSP county staff
 - b. □ QUESTION - regarding the district may not pay for the per diem directly...what does this mean? To whom would the district be paying the per diem other than those that are eligible? A caterer?
4. □ Peer or Peer Rental
 - a. □ COMMENT - after the bulleted list, the IRS language is already stated above under the per diem section. Consider removing.
5. □ Ineligible expenditures
 - a. □ The sentence at the start of the bulleted list - COMMENT - consider modifying to Some examples of ineligible expenditures include:
6. □ In the list of definitions:
 - a. □ Compensation for subcontracted personnel services
 - i. □ COMMENT - where it says including compensation for employees of the conservation district, including this confuses things since it sounds like this needs to be preapproved.
 - b. □ Conference and meeting costs
 - i. □ QUESTION - Where it references that the next monthly voucher is exempt, I thought the monthly vouchering requirement is changing.
 - c. □ Equipment rental
 - i. □ QUESTION - Second paragraph -the portion starting with reimbursement, this is confusing. I read this to say that in order for the district to get reimbursed by SCC, they have to first get reimbursed by the participant. Not sure what a participant is.
 - d. □ Leases
 - i. □ QUESTION - what does this mean? Reimbursement for a lease is only eligible if it is a lease for something covering all program activities?
 - e. □ Training and education
 - i. □ COMMENT - Consider adding after the next monthly voucher and is exempt from the monthly vouchering requirement.
 - ii. □ GRAMMATICAL - Last bullet in conferences - consider adding that in the last sentence to read the portion of the conference that is
 - f. □ Utilities

- i. □QUESTION - where do costs associated with website hosting and data archiving go and are they eligible?
- g. □Construction costs
 - i. □COMMENT - it would help to clarify what you mean by construction costs. For example, is construction under a DIP something different?
 - h. □Equipment purchase
 - i. □COMMENT - second paragraph - I don't understand what this refers to. Also the last sentence is very confusing and should be reworded.
 - i. □Clothing/apparel
 - i. □GRAMMATICAL - consider changing the first sentence to read - ...is reimbursable if purchase of apparel is necessary...
 - ii. □QUESTION - related to district logo clothing. So it is eligible for identifying staff representing district but not for promotion of district?
- 7. □Computing Conservation District Overhead Costs
 - a. □COMMENT - consider changing this section to include and contract overheads costs. Why not combine these two sections rather than essentially repeat them?
- 8. □Employee Composite Rate
 - a. □QUESTION - If VSP counties are the only other "entities" that this manual applies to, why not just say that throughout? If there are other entities, such as maybe funded by SFF or RPPP, wouldn't this apply to them too?
- 9. □Handling Reimbursement for Employer-paid benefits
 - a. □COMMENT - second bullet - consider capitalizing the referred to agencies.
 - b. □QUESTION - fifth bullet - referring to "these funds", which funds? Leave liability or everything listed above?

Section 5: Special Grant Program Comments

1. Operating Grant Programs
 - a. COMMENT - consider adding Conservation Technical Assistance with Implementation to read Implementation - Conservation Technical Assistance.
2. Capital Grant Programs
 - a. COMMENT - Add Livestock to the list
3. Implementation - Conservation Technical Assistance
 - a. GRAMMATICAL - modify first sentence to read ...funding to conservation districts from Conservation Technical...
 - b. COMMENT - last paragraph - maybe say something like, "unlike capital grant programs, which have funds set aside for cultural resources compliance..."
4. RCPP Match
 - a. QUESTION - the first sentence references pass through state capital legislative appropriations, if so, why isn't this in the capital section?
5. SFF
 - a. COMMENT - consider striking GHG from the paragraph
6. Capital Grant programs
 - a. GRAMMATICAL - First paragraph - consider modifying second sentence to remove length of time and adding in lifespan.
7. CREP
 - a. GRAMMATICAL - start first sentence This funding instead of The funding
 - b. QUESTION - end of first paragraph "and technical assistance" - The SCC provides technical assistance? Or funds TA?
8. Irrigation Efficiencies
 - a. GRAMMATICAL - first bullet. Change last sentence to read ...as needed a any time...instead of anytime.
 - b. GRAMMATICAL - second bullet. Change sentence to read ...develop, design and implement a project.
 - c. GRAMMATICAL - third bullet. Change sentence to read ...of the conservation practices...
9. Natural Resource Investments
 - a. QUESTION - regarding the sentence most pressing state and local priorities...NRI funding...Which is it? State or local priorities.
 - b. GRAMMATICAL - NRI enables districts to help...
 - c. GRAMMATICAL - It is flexible SCC project funding as it...
 - d. GRAMMATICAL - ...wide range of land uses and ownerships utilize...
10. Shellfish
 - a. GRAMMATICAL - ...conservation districts to implement conservation practices...
 - b. QUESTION - where it refers to reducing agricultural non-point...Only agricultural pollution? Not contaminated stormwater or failing septic?
11. Livestock
 - a. QUESTION - why is everything in alphabetical order except this?

Section 6: Getting Paid

Comments

1. Reimbursement basics
 - a. GRAMMATICAL - first paragraph, last sentence change landowners to cooperators.
 - b. GRAMMATICAL - and entities be registered. Strike out to
2. District Authorized Signatures Form
 - a. COMMENT - If this applies to entities other than districts, heading needs to be changed.
 - b. QUESTION - Is it possible for other entities, such as WSU or others to receive grants from SCC?
 - c. QUESTION - regarding wet signature, does the form with wet signatures get sent to the SCC or retained at the district (or other entity) office? This sections needs clarification.
 - d. QUESTION - third paragraph - where it refers to district office...should add county or other entity?
3. Composite Rate Forms
 - a. COMMENT - This is the third time I've seen this same information about composite rates.
 - b. QUESTION - first bullet - Isn't this being changed?
4. Voucher Payment Requests
 - a. GRAMMATICAL - first sentence should read Voucher payment requests...
5. Documents Required with Reimbursement Requests
 - a. GRAMMATICAL - 6th bullet - modify to read - Travel Expense Vouchers and receipts, signed and dated by authorized signatory, must be submitted whenever employee travel reimbursement is requested.
 - b. GRAMMATICAL - 6th bullet - first sub bullet - modify to read: Employees must purchase their per diem meals and claim reimbursement at the per diem rate using the A-20 Travel Expense Voucher or similar form containing all the required information. Reimbursement for lodging paid for with the district credit card is submitted only on the grant voucher form, rather than itemized on a A-20.
 - c. QUESTION - for bullet starting Copies of the... Why can't we upload completed cost share agreements and cultural resources forms as documents into CPDS instead of scanning and emailing them? You already look at CPDS for photos and other stuff.
6. Submittal of voucher and documentation
 - a. COMMENT - Last paragraph starting By naming the... Likewise, it would be helpful for us if the budget spreadsheets and A19s were named accordingly when sent to us, rather than simply named "BudgetSpreadsheet" and "A19."
7. Supporting documentation of costs
 - a. QUESTION - second bullet - referring to the accompanying math portion, What is this? Doesn't the composite rate form include this?
 - b. QUESTION - fifth bullet - Do you need the credit card statement, as well as the receipt when paying by credit card?
 - c. GRAMMATICAL - sixth bullet - add contributed labor forms after

copies of all receipts.

8.□Employee time sheets

a.□COMMENT - last bullet - referring to sentence for overtime eligibility, Everyone is eligible for overtime unless they qualify and are designated as exempt.

9.□CD Basic Allocation Payment

a.□GRAMMATICAL - first paragraph, first sentence...change to ...grant programs are made.

b.□GRAMMATICAL - last paragraph - change to SCC may, with notice,

10.□FY end and final request payment

a.□COMMENT - first bullet - consider adding a sentence to the end that reads - If a grant or contract is completed prior to the end of the fiscal year, all final documents and supporting materials, including the close out form, are requested to be submitted promptly to allow for potential reallocation of unspent funds.

Section 8: Cost Share Comments

- 1.□Participant labor rate
 - a.□QUESTION - what about participant equipment rates?
 - b.□QUESTION - How often do you intend to update this? Might be better to say to check with SCC finance staff for the current maximum rate.
- 2.□Approved practice types
 - a.□COMMENT - consider modifying and add a sentence to read - If NRCS or engineer standards and specifications are not followed, the district or entity is responsible to get the contractor and/or participant to remedy to the standard. No payment will be issued by SCC until the practice(s) meets the appropriate standards and specifications. For engineering practices, a licensed professional engineer must sign off on the practice verifying that it meets standards and specifications.
- 3.□Programs not covered in this policy
 - a.□GRAMMATICAL - modify sentence to read ...that are explicit...such directives
- 4.□Publicly-owned property eligibility
 - a.□GRAMMATICAL - first sentence ...property that is...
 - b.□COMMENT - second paragraph - add SCC Chief Financial Officer after RM.
 - c.□GRAMMATICAL - last paragraph - ...guidelines, and is...
- 5.□Cost sharing budget
 - a.□GRAMMATICAL - ...program, there is...
- 6.□Cost share limits
 - a.□GRAMMATICAL - Second bullet - strike reach out and replace with consult...correct the spelling of manager.
- 7.□Additional Policy
 - a.□QUESTION - First sentence - What does this mean?
 - b.□GRAMMATICAL - first bullet - Receipts detailing...
 - c.□GRAMMATICAL - second bullet - replace pictures with photos
 - d.□GRAMMATICAL - Third bullet - third sentence - In which case...
- 8.□Debarment and Suspension
 - a.□COMMENT - in section starting A SAM... Seems like I read all this somewhere else in this manual. Might want to think about reorganizing for a future version to avoid duplicative language and shorten the document.
- 9.□Cultural Resources
 - a.□GRAMMATICAL - In the new language, modify to read Cultural Resources investigative work...
 - b.□COMMENT - regarding the complied statement form, I request that we be able to upload it into CPDS instead of scanning and emailing. If you're going to require us to use it, I think it's only fair that you use it, too.
- 10.□Contract for Cost Share funds
 - a.□COMMENT - first paragraph - This is a repeat of what has already been stated.
 - b.□COMMENT - second bullet - referring to authorized signer, I thought a planner or technician could initial sections.

- c. □COMMENT - referring to submitting a voucher, all of this could be uploaded to CPDS.
- d. □QUESTION - for the bullets following paragraph that begins If multiple, why are these two items listed with bullets as if they are details from the paragraph above?
- e. □GRAMMATICAL - last sentence - remove their.

11. □CPDS

- a. □QUESTION - First paragraph where it refers to recipients, by recipient, do you mean grant recipient or cost share recipient?
- b. □COMMENT - referring to the following must be uploaded, As noted previously, there is an option to uploaded project related documents, so it makes sense to me to upload cultural resources documents, completed cost-share agreements, and associated backup, rather than scanning and emailing.

12. □Individual Contributed Services Form

- a. □COMMENT - consider modifying third paragraph to read - One form is required for each individual contributing services and each month the services are performed work on the project.
- b. □COMMENT - in paragraph starting sourcing materials, What about the value of equipment time and operation? Our policy is to use the local FSA rates for the various types of equipment. Also, if a cooperator hires someone to perform services, we go by the actual amount paid but require proof of payment. This needs to be addressed somewhere here.

13. □Cost share detail receipt form

- a. □COMMENT - second and third bullets - This doesn't work if the cooperator's contributions end up being more than estimated and the total cost is higher but the district's share (not percentage) remains the same.

14. □Donated Labor

- a. □COMMENT - in all of the removed language, there is a sentence beginning SCC Individual Contributed form seems out of context here.

15. □Methods of Payment

- a. □QUESTION - second bullet - What about assignment of payment? And "participant" is ambiguous term.
- b. □COMMENT - third bullet - Need to provide some explanatory text here, rather than just a link to the RCW.
- c. □QUESTION - fourth bullet - What if materials on hand are used?

16. □Partial Payment of Cost Share Award

- a. □QUESTION - referring to first paragraph and partially completed, What? Partially completed practices aren't eligible period. All practices must be complete and meet NRCS or engineer specs to be eligible for reimbursement.

17. □Assignment of payment

- a. □COMMENT - where it refers to participant, "Participant" is an ambiguous term. Previously, "cooperator" is used. Maybe "cost-share recipient."

18. □1099 - G Issuance

a. □COMMENT - referring to the work with MRSC - And what did you conclude? Provide a summary instead of just a link to the brief.

19. □Retroactive Payments Prohibited

a. □QUESTION - How do participants and cooperators differ?

20. □Equipment usage

a. □COMMENT - Reference to this should be made earlier in this section.

b. □COMMENT - Second paragraph - Again, documenting labor is described earlier with no mention of equipment. Make note of it earlier or move this up in the section.

21. □BMP Installation

a. □GRAMMATICAL - modify first sentence to read - The costs of material on hand...

b. □GRAMMATICAL - first bullet - modify bullet to read - The participant must provide a signed and dated listing of materials on hand. This backup needs to be included with the contract for reimbursement.

22. □Participant as Contractor

a. □COMMENT - referring to participant, there are so many other less ambiguous terms we could use.

b. □GRAMMATICAL - first sentence, add to after ...going

c. □QUESTION - second bullet - referring to the two additional bids, What is the rationale for this? If the cost-share amount is based on NRCS practice costs, what difference should it make? Seems to me that this would only be necessary if the cost-share recipient contests the cost estimate, in which case they would need to get bids to justify a different cost estimate.

d. □QUESTION - last sentence in this section, But if they hire people and pay them \$20 or \$30 per hour, don't we go by what they actually pay and require proof?

23. □Maintenance of BMPs

a. □COMMENT - referring to operators - another new term used.

b. □COMMENT - referring to FSA - I'm not aware of FSA having design life criteria for conservation practices. We go by NRCS.

c. □QUESTION - second paragraph where referring to participant, what about the operator?

24. □Implementation monitoring

a. □GRAMMATICAL - remove put on the ground. Remove consistent and replace with consistency.

25. □Other grant programs and cost sharing

a. □COMMENT - referring to CREP, if it's only CREP, it's either on the website or it isn't. If this applies to more than one program, that would make sense. Spell out CREP.

b. □GRAMMATICAL - consider changing language to - Other special purpose grant programs may include their own unique cost sharing policies. An example of this is the CREP Program, which has policies spelled out in that program's programmatic guidelines, the contract, and often on SCC website. Contact SCC financial staff or the grant program manager for additional

information on special grant programs.

26. □ Cost share appeals

a. □ QUESTION - Does this only apply to districts?

27. □ Cost Sharing Q/A

a. □ GRAMMATICAL - second question - consider modifying to - The cooperator's share is typically made up of in-kind labor billed at a max of \$25/hour for time, cooperator equipment time, and/or out-of-pocket cash.

b. □ COMMENT - Third question - This is not how we do it and never have. We come up with a cost estimate based off of NRCS practice rates or engineer's estimates. If a cooperator wants to contest the estimate, they have to get three bids, and we go with the lowest bid amount if it is higher than our estimate. The cost-share rate (percent) is set by policy or board action.

c. □ COMMENT - fifth question - In this case, I think you want to say bids from contractors. Quotes from vendors would only apply to materials.

d. □ QUESTION - sixth question - Who is the audience for this? Some of this makes it sound like it is intended for the cooperator. And the SCC doesn't set cost-share rates or amounts, just the per landowner/cooperator maximum per year.

e. □ QUESTION - eighth question - regarding when implementing a plan, Who makes this determination? Do we have to provide a copy of the conservation plan to SCC? What if someone signs up for CREP and another unrelated practice but may or may not fully implement a complete conservation plan?

Section 9: District Implemented Projects

- 1.□"in this section you'll learn"
 - a.□COMMENT - Maybe for the next version of this manual we think about reorganizing things so that there isn't so much duplication and the document can be shortened substantially. Because most of this appears to be a repeat of what I've already reviewed a couple of times earlier in the manual, I won't do it again in this section.
- 2.□DIP
 - a.□COMMENT - I wouldn't say landowners/cooperators are the lead planners for their projects. This implies the previous type you just mentioned, which is cost share.
 - b.□GRAMMATICAL -first paragraph - after prevailing wage requirements, add and any other public works project compliance requirements.
 - c.□COMMENT - Second half of second paragraph - Would another example be purchasing plants (from the PMC) and hiring the services of a WCC crew, but the cooperator installs the fence? One downside of DIPs is the bidding and public works requirements, but those wouldn't apply when purchasing through WACD and an agreement with Ecology for WCC crew work.
- 3.□District Landowner Agreement
 - a.□At the end with bullet starting The DIP closeout form - what is meant by "this form summarizes the landowners, CPDS Participant ID.
- 4.□Other Grant programs and DIPS
 - a.□COMMENT - where it is referred that program guidelines "often on SCC website", Is there another program besides CREP that has the program specific policies on the website? If yes, say what it is instead of saying they are often on the website.

Section 10: Other Requirements Comments

- 1.□Federal Audit Requirements
 - a.□COMMENT - second paragraph "The major audit policy" - This wording is confusing. What major audit policy are you referring to?
 - 2.□State auditor requirements
 - a.□QUESTION - where it says expenses for an audit are grant reimbursement allowable expenses, We can use any grant to pay for an audit?
 - 3.□Records Retention
 - a.□GRAMMATICAL - the sentence beginning Keep the following...This needs rewording.
-

Section 11: Glossary Comments

1. □ Best Management Practice
 - a. □ COMMENT - The NRCS refers to them simply as conservation practices.
2. □ Cooperator
 - a. □ QUESTION - where it refers to eligible participant, Eligible for what? Are entities that receive RPPP or SFF funds from the SCC considered cooperators? Do cooperators work directly with the SCC? Don't some cooperators get funding SCC from counties?
3. □ COMMENT - consider including the term Entities. You use this term throughout. Either don't use it or include it in the glossary.
4. □ GRANT
 - a. □ QUESTION - when referring to cooperative agreements, What is a cooperative agreement? Maybe include it's definition above. It's not included within the interagency agreement definition.
 - b. □ GRAMMATICAL - fix the first few words to read Grant is an award of...
5. □ Participant
 - a. □ COMMENT - I prefer cost-share recipient, since participant can mean so many different things.
6. □ Request for Applications
 - a. □ COMMENT - I don't recall seeing this in the manual. If it isn't in here, why put it in the glossary?

Overall Comments and Feedback

General comment - the term entity is used throughout and seems awkward. Maybe just something like "funding recipient" or "grant/contract awardee".

General comment - consider replacing BMP with the term practice, practices, or suite of practices as appropriate.

General Comment - consider not using contractions for words...i.e aren't.

First Name	Zorah Oppenheimer
Email	zoppenheimer@clarkcd.org
Who are you affiliated with?	Clark CD
Employment Type	District Manager
Section 1: General Information Comments	<p>NOTE: All comments made in the January WSCC Grants Manual Survey that were not addressed are repeated here and start with "1/25".</p> <p>- Districts and Counties Must Pay First and Payment of Allowable Costs - there is some duplication between these two sections which are sequential.</p> <p>- "Expense" appears for the first time under "Districts and Counties Must Pay First." The term expense is used throughout the manual to imply a cost that has been paid by the entity, and is used interchangeably with the term expenditure and cost. However, in the glossary, the term "expense" is defined as "Decreases in net total assets. Expenses represent the cost of operation incurred during the current period regardless of the timing of the related disbursements." The inclusion of "incurred during the current period regardless of the timing of the related disbursements" is the definition of an encumbrance, and does not apply to Districts. While Expenditure is defined differently, as "Decreases in net current financial resources. Expenditures include disbursements and accruals of the current period. Expenditures do not include encumbrances." The difference in definition between expense and expenditure has major implications for the timing of expenses. We believe it is acceptable to use the two terms interchangeably, however they must be defined the same way.</p> <p>- 1/25 - Tax Related Information (1099-MISC) - Align 1099 information (page 10) with actual guidelines (not all payments over \$600 need a 1099) or else just put a notice that Districts must follow federal regulations for issuing 1099 forms and note the operations brief on 1099 issuance for cost share.</p>
Section 2: Grants and Contracts Comments	<p>- In this section, you'll learn about..." doesn't match what's in the sections below.</p>

Section 3: Compliance Comments

- Overall, this section doesn't feel like it fits the term compliance or its own section. It seems most of the content has to do with either reimbursable expenses or getting paid, but really only monitoring compliance, recovery of payments, and CAPP relate to compliance.

- In this section, you'll learn about..." doesn't match what's in the sections below.

- Timing of Expenditures --> Does any District use the county or city as their treasurer? The italicized portion after "An exception to expenditure recognition..." seems more confusing than informative, particularly since their fiscal year would end December 31st anyway.

- 1/25 (edited for clarity) - Scenarios - Credit Cards - Do we need to include the credit card statement in our vouchers? Still doesn't state that anywhere. More clearly state that the Credit Card Statement AND the supporting receipt/document must accompany the voucher.

- Scenarios - Travel Vouchers --> Must be vouchered after travel has commenced? Likely intend to use the word concluded? What happens if someone incurs mileage on June 30th? How do we reimburse them on the day they are traveling?

- 1/25 - (clarified) Fiscal Year-End - There has been much confusion about contracted work that is completed in FY1 of a biennium and paid for in FY2 of the biennium for a two year grant. Please explicitly state that for grants that span two fiscal years, contracted work executed in one FY but not paid until the next IS eligible for reimbursement.

Section 4: Reimbursable Expenses Comments

- Staff or expenditures shared between two conservation districts: New language states: "The Agreement must identify which CD is the primary and receives payment from the second CD for staff services." Many of us share staff or expenses, and there is no primary or secondary. Please edit to remove or expand that sentence.

- Payroll - Aren't we getting rid of the January 1 comp rate update requirement?

- Travel and Transportation: "Out of country and out of state travel must be approved in advance of the travel taking place." Can you clarify in the manual that this is for flights or extended travel, or put some qualifiers on it? We regularly travel to the Portland metro area for training or if we go to Underwood CD, we drive down to Portland and pay a toll to cross back over on the Hood River bridge. This policy would make those costs require approval. Perhaps there could be a threshold at which out-of-state travel requires approval?

- Meal Per Diem Reimbursement: The restrictions on this exclude AmeriCorps members. Can this be opened up to staff, interns, and volunteers volunteering over some amount per week to the District?

- Meal Per Diem Reimbursement: "Those eligible for per diem reimbursement must pay for the costs and then be reimbursed by the district or entity." This is the opposite of how we are told to operate for Commission members on District-hosted tours, because it's administratively burdensome to handle a bunch of travel vouchers with a meal on it. Perhaps this line could be removed?

- Peer or Peer Rental (I think this is supposed to say peer TO peer not peer or peer): Edited this sentence to clarify that the Commission won't reimburse more than per diem: Original: The nightly rate plus associated fees must not exceed the per diem rate for the area. --> edited: REIMBURSEMENT FOR the nightly rate plus associated fees WILL not exceed the per diem rate for the area."

- Peer or Peer Rental - The edits state: "When there are multiple employees staying at the facility...The district must pay for the cost of the rental with agency card and one employee cannot incur the total cost of the rental and be reimbursed for the cost" à What is the intent of this policy? What if multiple employees choose to reserve accommodations together that are slightly above per diem? Past policy would allow them to submit receipts and be reimbursed up to per diem amounts by the District. This

addition seems unnecessary.

Cost Eligibility - Ineligible Expenditures:

- 1/25: Meals with Meetings - This is an allowable expense in the SAAM and should be allowed for Districts. If put on a training that covers a meal time, or at least an all day training/meeting, we should be allowed to provide lunch.

New additions include:

1. Mortgage payments - Why is this ineligible? What if the District wants to purchase an office building and takes out a loan to do so, how is this any different than rent?

2. Speaker fees and any travel costs associated with a speaker - This is quite restrictive and means we can't pay for hosting our own trainings. According to the definition in the glossary, a "Speaker is a person who presents information, ideas, or stories to an audience at an event. These can be any event, such as conferences, seminars, workshops, or webinars. Speakers are often experts in their fields and may include professionals, academics, or motivational leaders. Moreover, their primary goal is to educate, inspire, or entertain the audience, making the content relatable and accessible." This seems like an important eligible cost to improve the training and education of our district employees. What is the thought process behind this?

3. Host stipends for producers holding workshops - We need a way to pay for the labor provided to producers who host workshops. If a stipend isn't eligible, would an hourly rate be?

4. Tuition - this is so broad and needs clarification. For example, we have used SCC grant funds to pay for tuition at a local community college for a drone course for our FH grant. That would be ineligible under the new manual. Perhaps you could clarify that tuition for a degree program isn't eligible? Or tuition over \$4,000(?) per year?

Allowable Reimbursable Expenditures:

- 1/25 - Compensation for subcontracted personnel services... it's unclear if this is for any subcontract or just subcontracts for administrative work relating to staff. Regardless, having the contract be included in the addendum is a bit extra, and I don't think is actually enforced. Project plans change, and it's not feasible to have all subcontracting outlined in the addendum.

- Training and Education: Restating the request to add some base authorization for out-of-state travel that doesn't require a flight

and to address the blanket ineligibility of tuition. Suggest allowing costs up to a certain amount (\$2,000/grant?) without SCC approval.

Conditionally eligible reimbursable expenses:

- 1/25 (clarified) Clothing/apparel: Clothing for the purpose of identification or safety should be allowed on all grants where staff are paid to be in the field. The way it's written, it's unclear whether clothing for safety is allowed on capital grants but conditionally allowed on operating grants. Or if it is only conditionally allowed on operating grants but not allowed on capital.

- Computing Conservation District Overhead Costs - would be worth putting in here that the rate is 25%.

- Handling Reimbursement for Employer-Paid Benefits - Addition of the word "must" to the following sentence: "These funds [should] must be set aside in a separate account." The way that benefit accruals are handled is a District policy, not dictated by a grantor. It is the District's responsibility to ensure that funds are available to pay their liabilities. However, it is well within SAO guidance to use a formula to set aside a percentage of liabilities, and having them in a separate account is well beyond the scope of a granting agency. Additionally, see the general comments section for comment about including district governance requirements in the grants manual.

Comments

Section 6: Getting Paid

Comments

- Composite Rate Forms - states it's necessary every January, but earlier in Section 4, the January requirement is crossed out.

- Voucher Payment Requests - No deadline given for voucher submittal. There is a lot of duplication from section 3 here, would suggest linking to Section 3 for voucher detail.

- Documents required w/Reimbursement-> DIPs mentioned here, maybe say "monthly invoicing only required if project costs incurred that month"

- 1/25: Documents Required with Reimbursement Requests for Cost Share & DIPs: we've been told several times that the landowner's name must be at the top of the Cultural Resources statement but it's not in the manual or on the CR form. Can the CR form be amended to have fields for the CPDS #, cooperator name, and practices?

Section 7: Conservation District

Advance/Initial Payments

Comments

- Form for advance payment references "projects currently under contract" but manual references the cost share or DIP allocation. Are these describing the same thing? Does "under contract" reference the contract between SCC and the CD or the CD and the cooperator?

- Given our expanded projects, it would be helpful to allow for cash advances on a case-by-case basis outside of the traditional cost share/DIP process. For example, our septic reimbursements under our RCPP don't follow the typical process but are implemented on the ground.

Section 8: Cost Share Comments

- Cost Share Assistance Rate of Reimbursement
1/25 (clarified): Remove 50% cost share on public land. This should be allowed to be up to 100%, as with all other District cost share, based on local priorities. I see that later in the section it says you can ask for an exception. I would suggest saying "Cost share on publicly owned land is generally limited to 50% reimbursement, see Publicly-Owned Property Eligibility [link heading] for details."
- 1/25: Participant Labor Rate: Where does \$25 come from? Could we instead refer to the Washington or Federal volunteer labor rate? \$25 is pretty low.
- Approved Practice Types: Recommend adding examples of urban-specific practices (e.g., street tree planting, rain gardens) to better reflect urban/suburban conservation work.
- Additional Policy: The first sentence isn't clear: "SCC funds used for cost share assistance shall remain in effect."
- Contract for Cost Share Funds: Have a checklist linked here. There was a sheet they provided with the top ten things, that could be helpful to reference. Also, in general, the information around cost share is very outdated and needs an update. Even just a checklist would be helpful.
- Cost Share for Conservation District Associate Supervisors and District Staff - the last paragraph is out of place ("SCC's Individual Contributed Services Form must be submitted to document donated labor time. If the volunteer's...")
- Assignment of Payment: this form is quite confusing and could be streamlined and made more intuitive. We use it regularly and it's a great tool.
- Retroactive Payments Prohibited: I would suggest editing this sentence "All cost share funding must be vouchered for and completed by the end of the fiscal year if funded through operating funds or the end of the biennium if funded through capital funding." It should state that all cost share funding must be completed and vouchered for by the end of the grant effective date or end of the biennium, whichever comes first.
- Equipment Usage: Would suggest editing this sentence to add the text in caps: If the local FSA rate is not available OR REPRESENTATIVE OF AREA RATES, the district can use an average of two local bids from an equipment rental company, the NRCS

rate, or the district can adopt their own equipment usage rates based on local rates and board resolution.

- Cost sharing questions/answers we would recommend these be removed from the manual so staff can edit/add to them - the first question should reference the question later regarding appealing the cost share policy. Likewise, the question about cost sharing with another public entity should also reference the appeal question. Also restating that all FAQ/Q&As should be linked in the manual but housed elsewhere so they can be edited.

- Cost sharing with a public entity question, it says "except federal." Are we not allowed to cost share with a federal agency? It doesn't say that Federal agencies are not allowed above in the Publicly-Owned Property Eligibility section.

Section 9: District Implemented Projects

- Further detail or clarify the decision-making criteria used to determine eligible practices, specifically addressing urban conservation practices that are increasingly implemented by our district.
- Conservation District Staff Installing/Constructing Projects: The last bullet point, we don't understand this sentence: "All hours must be charged to the grant monthly." Do you mean that all hours worked under the grant must be vouchered on a monthly basis?
- District Landowner Agreement-reimbursement requests to be submitted on a monthly basis. Should it state this is when expenditures have been incurred or do they want a monthly voucher regardless?
- Reduce the requirements for inputting cooperators into CPDS for DIPS. Particularly for grouped activities such as chipping. Perhaps set a threshold of \$2,000/property or less doesn't need to be in CPDS. Inconsistencies in CPDS requirements between programs.

Section 10: Other Requirements Comments

N/A

Section 11: Glossary Comments

- BARS Manual is listed twice.
- Cooperator - would add "producer" to the list of who they can include.
- Envirothon - this is only mentioned in the glossary, no where else in the manual. Should either include in the manual or remove from glossary.
- GAAP - this is only mentioned in the glossary, no where else in the manual. Should either include in the manual or remove from glossary.
- Landowner - may also be referred to as producer.
- Open Contract - only mentioned in glossary, not the manual.
- Privately Owned Vehicle - only mentioned in glossary, not the manual.
- Purchase Card - only mentioned in glossary, not the manual.
- RFP - only mentioned in glossary, not the manual.
- RFA - only mentioned in glossary, not the manual.
- Speaker - the tone of this definition feels odd given that the manual is now making speaker fees ineligible for reimbursement.
- Supplemental Funding - only mentioned in glossary, not the manual.

Overall Comments and Feedback

- 1/25 - Navigation (clarified): Update the TOC. Simplify navigation within the manual to make it easier to read and jump to various sections. Add footer with section title and link it so it jumps back up to the TOC.

- 1/25 - Make dates in manual consistent. Currently dates on the website and in the document aren't consistent. For example, the website says the manual was updated in July 2023 (<https://www.scc.wa.gov/files/grant-and-policy-manual>), the effective date on the cover of the manual is July 2024, the adopted date is May 2023, and the footer date is June 2023.

- Run a grammar check on the whole manual. There are many spots with incorrect verb agreement, mixing tenses, etc.

- The way the manual is written, there is no way to implement a trial for multi-biennium contracts (as suggested in the RGP guidelines). Suggest adding something to allow for that when indicated by program guidelines.

- Throughout, there are references to overall District governance. Instead, reference the requirement to comply with CAPP guidelines to be eligible WSCC grants. District governance is outside of the scope of the Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual. Sections include: Section 2: Grants and Contracts - Guidance from the Washington State Auditor's Office Section 4: Reimbursable Expenses - Handling Reimbursement for Employer-Paid Benefits, Section 10: Other Requirements - Federal Audit Requirements, State Auditor Requirements, Audit Findings or Management Letter, Records Retention.

- 1/25 - Frequently asked questions need to be removed from the manual. They can be linked in the manual, but they aren't policy, and having them in the manual means staff can't edit them without going to the Commission and a 45-day comment period.

- From 1/25, but clarified and simplified - Overall, the biggest point of confusion in the manual has been around the timing of expenditures and how that interfaces with the fiscal year-end. Timing and eligibility of expenses are referenced or addressed throughout the manual. We understand no expenses can be reimbursed from a prior fiscal year, however, there has been significant confusion over the definition of an expense. For example, say we, as a cash-basis entity, use funding from a two-year SCC grant to hire a company to complete a survey. We hire them in May of FY1 of the biennium, they complete work in May and June, and bill us in July (FY2 of the biennium), and we pay the invoice in July. Please clearly state in the manual that an eligible expense with this timing would be acceptable.

First Name	Dave Hedric
Email	dave.hedrick@ferrycd.org
Who are you affiliated with?	Ferry Conservation District
Employment Type	District Manager

Section 1: General Information Comments	<p>First of all, thank you for all the effort that has gone into this project. Probably like many district managers, I never seem to have the time to give you the feedback you deserve for doing this work. I had my financial staff member go through this, and she said the changes looked good and didn't have any comments.</p> <p>I'm not sure if you've gotten a lot of comments or just a few. There were definitely issues that needed to be resolved that were discussed during manager/ED meetings, and our RM's got an earful that they were bringing forward on our behalf. I feel that the SCC heard us and formed a committee to help implement changes. For me, once that was done, I had confidence that the right people were having the right dialogue, and something better was going to come out the other side.</p> <p>It is easier for us to give feedback through the committee members, and maybe more importantly, through our RMs. Those conversations are a "one-stop shop" for many things that impact our districts. SCC operations and guidelines being a popular topic. We have confidence in those people, which gives us the opportunity to focus on other things. And there are a lot of other things.</p> <p>This likely has been an unhelpful comment. Thank you again to the SCC for giving us this process. I value the SCC fiscal staff for their willingness to work through the guidelines. I appreciate my fellow CD peers who are spending their valuable time on the committee. I am thankful for our RMs, who we continually put in difficult positions as our direct voices to the SCC.</p>
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First Name	Linda Lyshall
Email	llyshall@snohomishcd.org
Who are you affiliated with?	Snohomish CD
Employment Type	District Manager

Section 4: Reimbursable Expenses Comments

Our comments are regarding the required preauthorization form for Light Refreshments, mentioned on page 32. Completing this form for preapproval creates undue burden.

The level of detail requested (quantities of specific refreshments, name of the catering company) is not something that any other agency requests.

The questions about the equipment rental cost and meeting room rental seem extraneous - we are not aware of any requirement to have such facilities costs pre-approved.

It is often difficult to ascertain the exact numbers of participants, and therefore the specific quantities of refreshments, far enough in advance to process for pre-approval. Typically we finalize the expected attendance the day of or day prior to an event, then purchase beverages and refreshments at that time. Requiring this level of detail on the form hampers our ability to route it for review and approval in timely fashion before the meeting, and predisposes last minute and rushed submission.

We note that the SAAM guidance (Section 70.10.40, <https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/legacy/policy/70.10.pdf>) does not require this level of detail for pre-approval. The required components are the attendees (organizations or individuals) and the purpose of the meeting.

We propose that the form be revised to include only the following fields, structured as short answer questions unless otherwise specified:

- a. Date of meeting
- b. Purpose of meeting (check-boxes as currently structured)
- c. Anticipated number of participants
- d. Organizations, agencies, or affiliations represented amongst participants
- e. Describe how meals and/or light refreshments is an integral part of the meeting
- f. Types of Beverages to be served
- g. Estimated total cost of beverages
- h. Types of Refreshments to be served
- i. Estimated total cost of refreshments
- j. If meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) will be provided, list estimated number of each and dates on which they will be served
- k. Estimated total cost of meals
- l. Estimated total cost of meals and refreshments

Revising as proposed would reduce administrative burden on the preparer and reviewer. We appreciate your consideration of these proposed changes.

Overall Comments and Feedback We appreciate everyone's efforts to work through this manual and update it.

First Name	Megan Stewart
Email	megan@asotincd.org
Who are you affiliated with?	Asotin County Conservation District
Employment Type	District Manager

Overall Comments and Feedback

At the WSCC meeting in September 2023, (3 months into the biennium) I let Commission staff know that the Asotin County Conservation District staff was willing to help with "overhauling" the Grants Procedure Manual. Obviously, there were more pressing issues at the time and it was down the priority list. Fast forward one year and it was very disappointing to hear that Commission staff was working on updates internally. There wasn't a plan to engage Districts for input outside the formal comment periods. The reality is the 45-day comment period does not allow time to make changes and incorporate feedback. Many Districts expressed concern, and I appreciate that the Executive Director formed a group of managers and fiscal staff to "review the current Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual and work together with us on improvements". This group met in February and had a great meeting. There were several ideas and concerns brought up which were already addressed in the updates that Commission staff made internally. It validated that the Commission and Districts are on the same page about many things that haven't worked well. Unfortunately, the timing meant the ability to incorporate recommendations for this biennium wasn't feasible. I am still waiting to receive a copy of the report from the consultant who facilitated the meeting as it should capture all the items identified by the workgroup. Overall, the Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual provides the outline and details needed to implement grants and contracts. At the same time, the systems being used are outdated. Allowing this group to continue the efforts that were started will be important for the 2027-2029 biennium and beyond. That work will be impacted by technology and data management changes. The approach to delivering WSCC programs to Districts needs to change. There has been significant growth in programs and funding in the past 3 years. It is critical that WSCC and Districts work together to find solutions and streamline processes where possible. The amount of documentation provided IN a voucher is crazy. There are better mechanisms that can be incorporated into the system to provide the Commission the required information in an efficient manner. Consistency is important and currently there is little to none between programs when it comes to allocation of funds and development of outcomes. This creates the potential for problems. My biggest fear as a District Manager is if the District was to incur the costs for a project and the expenses on a voucher were rejected. When project caps are \$100,000, this could bankrupt a District. Most Districts don't have the funds to cover expenses if denied which leaves us vulnerable. While I feel there has been significant effort by Commission staff to address concerns and issues that have been identified, there is still a lot of work to be done. This update to the Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual is the first step of a complete overhaul to the grant system.

First Name	Craig Nelson
Email	craig@okanogancd.org
Who are you affiliated with?	Okanogan Conservation District
Employment Type	District Manager

**Section 1: General Information
Comments**

-□"Expense" appears for the first time under "Districts and Counties Must Pay First." The term expense is used throughout the manual to imply a cost that has been paid by the entity, and is used interchangeably with the term expenditure and cost. However, in the glossary, the term "expense" is defined as "Decreases in net total assets. Expenses represent the cost of operation incurred during the current period regardless of the timing of the related disbursements." The inclusion of "incurred during the current period regardless of the timing of the related disbursements" is the definition of an encumbrance, and does not apply to Districts. While Expenditure is defined differently, as "Decreases in net current financial resources. Expenditures include disbursements and accruals of the current period. Expenditures do not include encumbrances." The difference in definition between expense and expenditure has major implications for the timing of expenses. We believe it is acceptable to use the two terms interchangeably, however they must be defined the same way.

-□Pages 8 and 9 contain multiple redundant paragraphs

-□The terms 'reasonable and 'prudent person' are used. These are subjective terms that continues the lack of clarity of what's allowable that exists now. It means that someone is making a judgement call based on feeling and opinion and those are rarely consistent.

-□SCC Pays Promptly-in most cases, vouchers are paid within 10 days of receiving a properly completed voucher??? Not even close. Our last 2 RGP vouchers: Submitted 2/20, pd. 4/16; submitted 3/16, pd. 4/23. Typically, it takes about a month to receive reimbursement (when SCC asks for additional information, even the most minor like questioning a date of pymt, it takes longer).

-□1099 info on pg. 10 - states that ALL nonemployees who are paid over \$600, but corporations (LLCs, C & S corporations) are generally exempt, and there are other exceptions. The language creates confusion (taxes are stressful enough).

Section 2: Grants and Contracts Comments

-□In this section, you'll learn about..." doesn't match what's in the sections below.

Section 3: Compliance Comments

-□Scenarios - Travel Vouchers --> Must be vouchered after travel has commenced? Likely intend to use the word concluded? What happens if someone incurs mileage on June 30th? How do we reimburse them on the day they are traveling?

-□Vouchering --> states "contracts may bill monthly, quarterly, or upon completion". Is this talking about contracts between districts and contractors? If so, how does that work with their preference for having everything in the voucher be from the voucher for that month?

-□Vouchering --> states that expenditures must be vouchered for within 60 days of the district paying. This insinuates it's actually is okay for us to go outside the voucher month. If we pay for something on April 16, we could still voucher for it 60 days later in June for May expenditures.

-□Scenarios --> "must be vouchered when the invoice is paid by the district". For contractors, we pay them at the board meeting...? So should their May work, that gets a check written in June, actually go in the June voucher that we make in July?

-□Fiscal Year - End -> must be paid and received by the district by June 30 - how does that work with us writing all the checks at July board meetings. Is board meeting the date when we "pay" someone or is it a different, earlier date.

-□For travel, registration and airfare payment happens sometimes months in advance of the training or meeting. Those expenses are 'in hand' and should be allowed to be submitted for reimbursement in the month they are paid for. The reason for the travel is rarely canceled and those attending rarely change plans. Allow CDs to include registration and airfare in the voucher the month they are purchased. If necessary, a refund can be added to the next voucher. This was an effective procedure years ago.

-□'Within 10 days of the expiration date of a closing grant, all financial, performance, and other reports required under the grant or contract are due to SCC.' Why create a stressful situation by requiring all documentation submitted within 10 days? Ecology allows 90 days. Federal grants allow at least 90 days. Why is there no trust that we are paying first and asking for reimbursement after? That's the rule, we follow it.

Section 4: Reimbursable Expenses Comments

- Speaker fees and any travel costs associated with a speaker - This is quite restrictive and means we can't pay for hosting our own trainings. According to the definition in the glossary, a "Speaker is a person who presents information, ideas, or stories to an audience at an event. These can be any event, such as conferences, seminars, workshops, or webinars. Speakers are often experts in their fields and may include professionals, academics, or motivational leaders. Moreover, their primary goal is to educate, inspire, or entertain the audience, making the content relatable and accessible." This seems like an important eligible cost to improve the training and education of our district employees. This rule needs to be removed to allow CDs to remain effective at community engagement.
- Why does the commission need a copy of an ILA between 2 CDs, especially when we will include all documentation for contractual expenses? We can manage our contracts.
- Out of country and state travel approved by program manager and the fiscal staff. We already approve these within our district via the district manager and board. It feels a little time exhaustive to have to have so many people approve travel. What if it is already in our addendum and applications? On page 35, it says equipment does not need approval if already in the addendum, could we add something similar here? If any item is included in the addendum, it should be considered approved by the Commission.
- Ineligible costs -> speaker fees ineligible, but on page 31, contracts with facilitators is eligible. What is the difference? Similarly, why can we not pay a producer a stipend for hosting and holding a workshop. If they are providing expertise, it would be great to reimburse them for their time, knowledge, and energy
- Equipment rental rates - a lot of conflicting information. Clearly state what a district is supposed to do with equipment that does not have mileage rates - chippers, masticators, ATV/UTV. And why is that different than what we ask of landowners? We've been told we cannot have a set rate for our own district equipment (except vehicles with the state reimbursement rate). However, previously we were told they will not reimburse on gas and maintenance. Examples:
 - o□Ineligible: depreciation of equipment (is this their way of nixing set rates from the district end?)
 - o□Eligible: equipment rental (rental rates consistent with conservation district rates or market) - so we can use a rental rate, or we can only use a rental rate if we literally go and rent something?
 - o□Eligible: fuel for ATV/UTV as no mileage rate available
 - What about maintenance for these?
 - o□Later on - cost share, landowners use rental rates provided by FSA or average of 2 bids from local market.
- Equipment purchase (pg 35) -> "allowable expense if included in

the scope of work OR have prior written authorization from the financial staff OR program manager for all equipment purchases totaling over \$2000". I like it this way, provides flexibility and shows trust for how we spend money. The commission sometimes seems to overstep slightly in wanting to authorize our expenses.

- o□ Reads that if it is our addendum, we don't have to request authorization.
- o□ Reads that if it is not in the addendum, we only need approval from either the program manager or financial staff.

Section 5: Special Grant Program N/A

Comments

Section 6: Getting Paid

Comments

-□Composite Rate Forms - states it's necessary every January, but earlier in Section 4, the January requirement is crossed out.

-□Pg 53 - "subcontracts and interlocal agreements must be included when vouchering for reimbursement for the first time" Which subcontracts and interlocal agreements? Do you want every agreement the CD is a party to or just the one's related to this particular voucher? Please clarify.

-□Credit Card statements submitted only once/month instead of duplicates with every voucher.

Section 7: Conservation District Advance/Initial Payments

Comments

-□Form for advance payment references "projects currently under contract" but manual references the cost share or DIP allocation. Are these describing the same thing? Does "under contract" reference the contract between SCC and the CD or the CD and the cooperator?

Section 8: Cost Share Comments

- Assignment of Payment: this form is quite confusing and could be streamlined and made more intuitive. We use it regularly and it's a great tool.
- Consider flexibility in combining BMPs on an appendix B when the practices are so interwoven, it becomes difficult for a contractor to distinguish between activities. Forest Health practices (limb up, thin, and treat the material) are three separate codes, but a contractor does all the work at once and bounces between them. Or the pipeline, trough, heavy use area. Or work with district staff to use something other than an NRCS standard so that it covers all the work being accomplished, but doesn't split it up so detailed. The separation of BMPs in these examples is also difficult for budgeting. If the thinning goes "over budget" because the contractor allocated more time to thinning than pruning trees up, landowners miss opportunities for reimbursement because one BMP "went over" while another "went under", but it really is just the allocation of hours from the contractor.
- Fix the Appendix B form. The percentage box doesn't calculate well and needs adjustments each time. The Materials section should say 'Materials and Contracted Labor'. Instructions are not correct.
- Don't split a single labor contract into multiple BMPS.
- Publicly-Owned Property Eligibility section states a maximum 50% cost-share rate for practices installed on property that is defined as title to the property held by federal, state, local government, etc. First, the federal and state government don't have 'title' to property so that may be problematic in many situations. Secondly, this policy conflicts with a later policy regarding projects implemented by a cooperator who is leasing property. We believe it should be clearly stated in this section that if the project is being implemented by a leasee or permittee the normal cost-share rates shall apply. This is frequently done in our area with livestock producers who implement projects to protect water quality from grazing activities and they must bear the burden of cost for all aspects of the project and maintenance. These private citizens should be eligible for the same cost-share rates regardless of the project location.
- "Location of BMPs" stipulates how cost-share is handled in urban areas vs. rural farms and ranches. The first bullet should be reduced to, "Cost sharing may be used in urban areas the same as all other areas in a conservation district service area. Projects funded in urban areas must meet the same requirements as those funded elsewhere." When you say urban and agricultural land areas, you are leaving out many land use types we all do work on.

Section 9: District Implemented Projects

-□District Landowner Agreement-reimbursement requests to be submitted on a monthly basis. Should it state this is when expenditures have been incurred or do they want a monthly voucher regardless?

-□"Administrative hours, project oversight, and general staff time must be charged to the TA portion of the award, not the DIP allocation" pg 81. "for actual implementation of the BMP"

o□How does this work for DIPs that are purely contracted out? Or in instances where the grant does not have an allocated TA bucket? Fine for WFF and NRI, but RGP set up had an application process where you applied for projects and each application became an outcome. In those latter cases, we've been charging staff time to implement the project by setting up the contractor, coordinating the engineer, which is also "implementation" just not directly of the BMP.

Section 10: Other Requirements Comments

N/A

Section 11: Glossary Comments

-□BARS Manual is listed twice.

Overall Comments and Feedback

- The way the manual is written, there is no way to implement a trial for multi-biennium contracts (as suggested in the RGP guidelines). Suggest adding something to allow for that when indicated by program guidelines.
 - These guidelines should be thoroughly rewritten through an interactive process with your primary customer, conservation districts, after Commission staff have had ample opportunity to understand the ramifications of these rules and how they are applied in a local CD office. Furthermore, CD staff and supervisors should be afforded the opportunity to learn more about the restrictions and rules being placed upon Commission staff in an effort to better understand each other's needs
 - The guiding principles of these rules should be based in statute, not what maybe feels better to an auditor or someone outside of the world in which we work. The first rule of thumb in determining if a new policy or clarification of the policy is to be implemented is, "how will this change improve efficiency of conservation district operations, preferably to make their work less burdensome.". If it can't meet that standard clearly, the rule should be rethought.
 - Stop making policies for the error or misuse of funds by one or even just a couple of conservation distircts. The vast majority of CDs operate very complex operations and do so with minimal to no findings and management letters from the state auditor's office. This should be strongly considered why training to determine whether a policy is actually necessary. Punish those who do wrong instead of burdening those of us who are doing right.
-

Improving usability of the State Conservation Commission Grant Contract and Procedure Manual

Facilitation report-out from February 20,
2025

Prepared by: Jessica Wilson, Alchemical Strategy

March 8, 2025

Updated June 3, 2025

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Background

The State Conservation Commission (SCC) uses a guide called the “Grant Contract and Procedure Manual ” to provide detailed instructions for conversation districts (CDs) to

comply with grant program requirements. The grant manual was developed over time and was modeled after other natural resource-relevant state agency grant handbooks like those from the Recreation Conservation Office, Department of Natural Resources, and Department of Ecology. SCC's manual had to adapt quickly to many programmatic changes over the recent past, which lead to some duplication and fragmentation of information throughout the manual. Despite SCC staff's best efforts to gather and gauge feedback from CDs to inform the content of the manual, minimal input into changes in the manual from Conservation Districts as programs grew in number and scope created further communication challenges.

Washington has strict government transparency rules and regulations compared to other states. These compliance rules dictate what information governments need to retain and report when they do business- including receiving grant funding. SCC strives to comply with grant compliance best practices and ensure CDs have adequate reporting to meet all federal and state requirements, and that SCC remains in compliance.

Both the growth of the size and scope of programs and the need for strict compliance guidelines have led to challenges between SCC and CDs with the Grant Contract and Procedure Manual. Further complicating the dynamic, CDs have received varying guidance from SCC staff on how to interpret key elements of the Grant Contract and Procedure Manual, with program staff sometimes deviating from finance staff in recommendations. Because of these challenges, some CDs expressed deep frustration about the grant manual and associated processes.

To better understand CDs' concerns and address potential improvements to the manual, SCC created a survey and hosted a facilitated meeting. This report summarizes the findings from both the survey and facilitated meeting and provides concrete recommendations for SCC to improve the grant manual. These recommendations are based on an iterative model of improvement, seeking to slowly move toward the goal of complete ease-of-use for CDs while building buy-in from participating CDs along the way. The appendix also includes some "parking lot" ideas from the facilitated meeting; these are ideas that participants had to improve other areas of SCC operations apart from the grant manual and could provide a framework for SCC to make further improvements directly based on feedback and data from CDs.

Current state of the Grant Contract and Procedure Manual

What Works Well:

1. **Fund Applications & Reimbursement:** The process of applying for funds is efficient, with quick reimbursements.
2. **Information Accessibility:** CD staff can easily find answers to questions, and the Grant Contract and Procedure Manual is searchable, enhancing accessibility.
3. **Staff Knowledge:** Districts believe that SCC staff are well-equipped to provide accurate answers regarding the Grant Contract and Procedure Manual.
4. **Delegation of Policy Decisions:** Some grant policies are delegated to Districts, allowing for greater flexibility at the local level.
5. **Cost Share Flexibility:** Districts have control over setting cost share rates, increasing adaptability to local needs.
6. **Simplified Application Process:** The application process is simple, making it easy for CDs to engage.
7. **Flexibility in Funding:** There is flexibility in how salary versus cash funding is allocated for CDs.
8. **Accountability:** The Grant Contract and Procedure Manual maintains a good balance between the level of detail required for accountability and the flexibility it offers.
9. **Finance Language Use:** The Grant Contract and Procedure Manual utilizes clear financial terminology, which supports transparency and clarity.

What Needs Clarification or Updates:

1. **Grant Guidelines Integration:** There is a lack of clear alignment between the smaller grant guidelines and the "big manual," leading to potential confusion. The manual, built over time, needs to be cleaned up and cross-referenced with program guidelines.
2. **Consistency Across Grants:** New programs have been rolled out inconsistently, and there is a need for a consistent outline and content, where applicable, across all grant programs to avoid disparities.
3. **Matrix Creation:** A matrix is needed to tie all program elements together to ensure coherence and clarity, as well as an easy visual reference.

4. **Innovation & Long-Term Spending:** There's a need to foster innovation beyond the biennium in terms of spending for programs, while simultaneously increasing accountability and transparency through enhanced reporting requirements for CDs.
5. **Specific Information Requirements:** The manual should clearly specify the information that needs to be provided, improving consistency and clarity in communication.
6. **Clarity and Defined Terms:** There is a need for clearer writing and a glossary to define terms more precisely throughout the manual.
7. **Policy vs Procedure Distinction:** The manual should more clearly differentiate between policy and procedure, with specific details on both. The SCC needs to provide clear policy guidance and communicate effectively to CDs.

Improvement action plan recommendations

Common Vision & Goals

- Empower SCC/CDs to be effective and efficient as partners.
- Create a manual that provides clarity, eliminating confusion for CDs and minimizing the need for SCC staff intervention.
- Ensure the manual is a one-stop resource with clear, well-defined rules and accessible resources.
- Support locally led conservation efforts
- Develop a structure with a clear purpose for each step, ensuring the manual is functional and adaptable over time.

Action Plan Overview

Phase I: Language Clarity & Terminology Standardization

Goal: Improve language clarity throughout the manual to ensure consistency and understanding.

Actions:

- Conduct a review of the Manual's language for clarity, removing ambiguity.
- Develop and incorporate a glossary to define key terms.
- Simplify financial and technical jargon for accessibility by a broad audience.

Timeline:

- **Week 1-2:** Review existing manual content for ambiguous language.
- **Week 3-4:** Develop glossary and standardize terminology.
- **Week 5-6:** Update manual with revised language and terminology, leaving time to ensure Commission approval and CD feedback, if needed.

Outcome: A clearer, easier-to-understand manual with standardized terms.

Phase 2: Sustainability & Ease of Rebuilding (Including Matrix Creation)

Goal: Create a structure that can be easily updated and rebuilt with minimal effort.

Actions:

- Develop a modular structure for the manual, where sections can be easily updated without overhauling the entire document. (Note: This matrix is already complete and just needs added to the manual)
- Design the matrix to be easily customizable and accessible for regular updates.
- Establish a team or process for regular reviews and updates to ensure long-term sustainability.

Timeline:

- **Week 1-3:** Develop modular structure and matrix for manual use.
- **Week 4-5:** Test for usability and ease of updating.
- **Week 6:** Finalize and implement update processes.

Outcome: A sustainable manual structure that can be easily updated with minimal effort.

Phase 3: Holistic Reordering of the Manual's Content

Goal: Restructure the manual for better flow and organization, aligning it with the logical sequence of processes.

Actions:

- Analyze the current content structure to identify redundancies and gaps.
- Create a new outline, focusing on the user's journey from start to finish.
- Reorganize sections by categories (e.g., application process, cost-share, reporting requirements).

- Review with key stakeholders (CDs, regional managers, program managers) for feedback.

Timeline:

- **Week 1-3:** Content analysis and outline development.
- **Week 4-5:** Reorganize sections and implement a new structure.
- **Week 6:** Stakeholder feedback and revisions.
- **Commission meeting:** Using established commission meeting process, workshop changes with CDs and Commission, to be finalized through a Commission meeting.

Outcome: A more user-friendly manual with logical flow and easy navigation.

Phase 4: Ensure support for locally led conservation

Goal: Make the manual more adaptable to local needs and enhance the partnership between SCC and CDs.

Actions:

- Incorporate feedback from CDs in the Grant Contract and Procedure Manual working group and regional managers to understand local needs.
- Continue to allow flexibility in certain areas (e.g., cost-share rates, project guidelines) to accommodate regional variation.
- Highlight examples of locally led successful projects in the manual to guide others.

Timeline:

- **Week 1-2:** Gather feedback from regional managers and CDs.
- **Week 3-4:** Update sections with locally adaptable guidelines, as appropriate.
- **Week 5-6:** Gather local success stories for the manual
- **Week 7-8:** Edit stories and incorporate them into appropriate sections within the manual.

Outcome: A manual that supports locally driven initiatives and is flexible enough to allow adaptation by individual districts.

Phase 5: User Friendliness & Training

Goal: Ensure the manual is easy to navigate and provides training for its users.

Actions:

- Conduct user testing to identify areas where users struggle to navigate or understand.
- Develop training materials (e.g., video tutorials, workshops) to help users navigate the manual.
- Offer periodic training sessions to staff and districts for ongoing learning.

Timeline:

- **Week 1-2:** Conduct user testing and gather feedback.
- **Week 3-4:** Develop training materials.
- **Week 5-6:** Finalize content.
- **Ongoing:** Conduct training sessions and finalize materials.

Outcome: An intuitive manual that is supported by training materials to ensure user proficiency.

Long-Term Sustainability and Update Process

Goal: Ensure that the manual remains relevant and sustainable over time.

Actions:

- Establish a regular review cycle (e.g., annually) for manual updates and improvements.
- Create a feedback loop for continuous improvements, with a focus on evolving needs and regulations.
- Designate a team or individual responsible for managing updates and sustaining the manual.

Timeline:

Establish review cycle and feedback process.

- **Ongoing:** Regular updates and team management.

Outcome: A sustainable, living document that evolves to meet ongoing needs.

Appendix A: Unabridged facilitation notes

What works well?

- 1) Applying for funds gets you money- speed of reimbursement
- 2) Looking for an answer, can find it
- 3) Staff can answer questions
- 4) Searchable document [Grant Contract and Procedure Manual]
- 5) Delegating policy decisions to Districts for flexibility
- 6) Cost share rates are set by Districts
- 7) Simplicity in application
- 8) Flexibility in salary vs cash
- 9) Level of detail [needed] for accountability
- 10) Uses the language of finance

What needs clarification or updates?

- 1) Tie between smaller grant guidelines and the “big manual”
- 2) Manual has been built over time, needs cleaned up/crosswalked back to program guidelines*
- 3) Consistency or outline of grants to ensure no inconsistencies- new programs have been implemented inconsistently*
- 4) Creating a matrix that ties everything together
- 5) Championing innovation- look beyond the biennium in spending money, [at the same time] step up accountability and transparency [reporting requirements for CDs]
- 6) [Needs to be] specific [about] what information needs to be provided
- 7) Clarity in writing and defined terms- consistency
- 8) Glossary
- 9) What is policy vs procedure?
 - a. Break apart the policy vs the procedure [in more detail in the manual]
- 10) Policy clarification from the State Conservation Commission
 - a. Communicate that [to CDs] clearly

*Was mentioned more than once

Group One: Sec. 3, Compliance

- 1) Eliminate leeway in no activity report (group 3 said this as well)

- 2) July 10 even year grant cutoff timeline for when activity can be reported for contracts in the middle
- 3) SAO wants exceptions tracking by policy and where allowable
- 4) Procedures to support paid invoice timeline for monthly vouchering

Group Two: Sec. 4, Reimbursable expenses

- 1) Visual chart for allowable vs not, better define goods and services
 - a. Clearly define travel and training
- 2) Like gray areas [in manual] for flexibility
- 3) Reorganize to start with allowable
- 4) Start with the purpose of the section, [write it] for the audience
- 5) Which things fall under overhead? [Need to know] ahead of time
- 6) Procedure for purchases, consistency

Group Three: Sec. 6, Getting paid

- 1) More options for advanced payments, RCO example
- 2) Pre-authorization for projects
- 3) Account for delegation of authority within the District
- 4) Activity vs expenses incurred
- 5) Support forms- what's needed and why?

Group Four: Sect. 8/9: Cost Share & DIP

- 1) Equipment and labor rates doesn't match up, spell out the distinction
- 2) Matrix of grant programs, visual presentation
- 3) Clarify prioritization guidelines
- 4) Cost share appeal combined with general
- 5) More local control over prioritization through policy
- 6) Is it necessary to get 2nd bids?
- 7) Landowner accountability for multiple counties
- 8) Materials costs, ways to talk to OFM about previous purchases

Common vision and goals

- 1) Empower SCC/CDs to be effective and efficient as partners
- 2) [The manual] creates more answers than questions
- 3) One stop clarity
- 4) No more having to be "dug out" [for CDs to not have to be saved by SCC staff when the manual creates confusion]

- 5) Clear rules
- 6) Stand-alone document with links to resources
- 7) Support locally-led conservation
- 8) Sustainable- can be rebuilt with a minimum of effort
 - a. The matrix, for example, should be able to be rebuilt with a minimum of effort
- 9) Structure that has clear purpose for each step

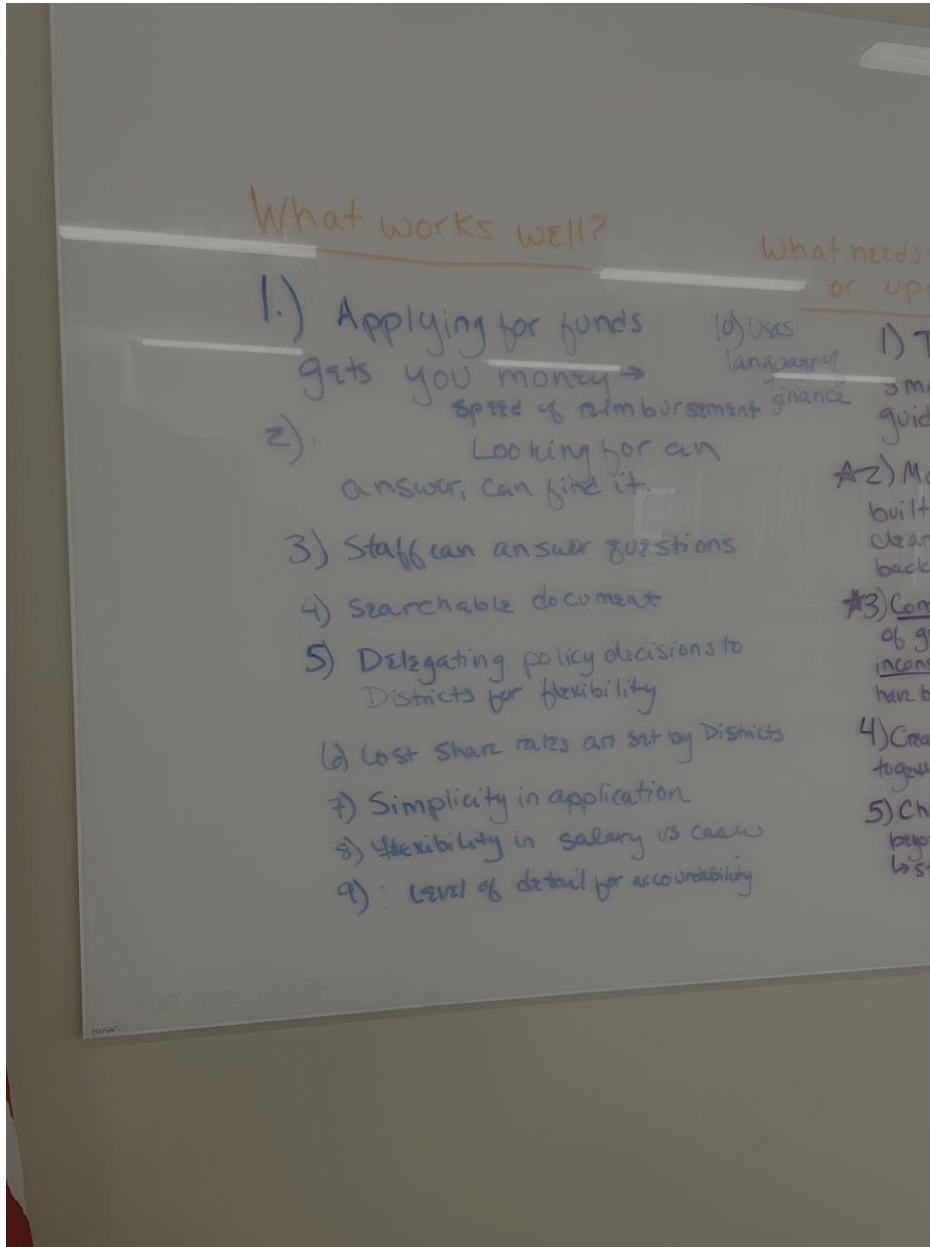
How to reach our goals- suggested action plan

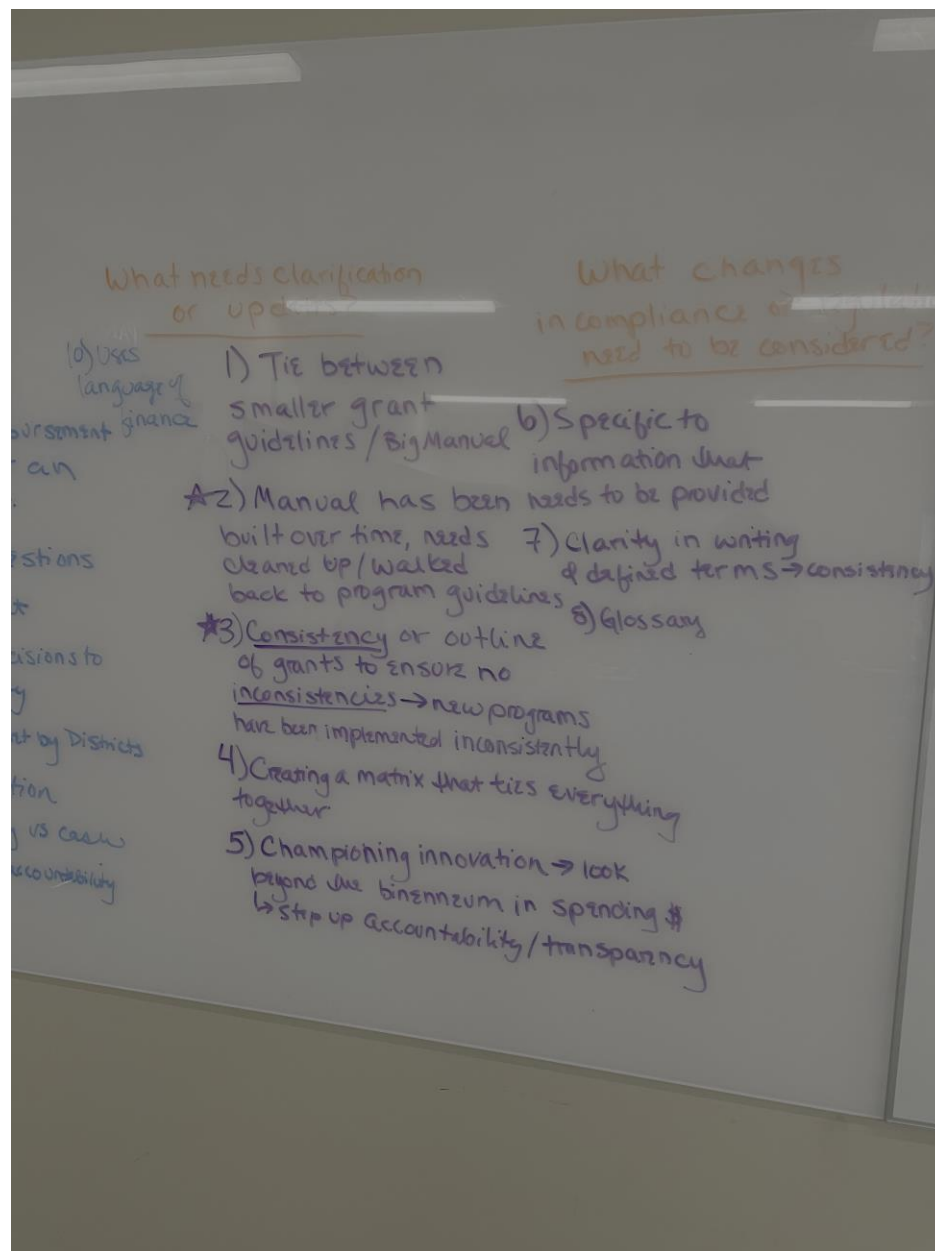
- 1) Language clarity- high impact
- 2) Organizational structure [of manual]- lower impact than clarity
 - a. Holistic reordering of contents
- 3) User friendliness and training- lower impact than clarity
 - a. Center for Technical Development
- 4) Software/technology- low feasibility (due to resource constraints)
- 5) Minimize barriers to local implementation
 - a. Ensure regional manager input

Timeline

- March & May commission meetings
 - Special meeting is a possibility
- End of biennium
- What is feasible by July 1, 2025?
- Commission needs to vote by Mar or May 2025
- Ensure policy changes apply in the biennium passed
- Phase I- stabilizing
- Phase II- future phases 2026 & beyond
- It's an ongoing commitment, communication with CDs is key
- No delays [for payment processing] on the July 1st deadline should result from this work

Photos of notes





1) what is policy vs. procedure?

↳ Break apart the policy
vs. procedure?

2) Policy clarification from State
Conservation Commissioners
↳ communicating that clearly

9 Goals

Objective 9

nan questions

g out*

links & resources

on

min of effort

isly modified

pose for each step

Group 1: Sec 3: Compliance

- * - State grants like federal grants/audits by risk
- Spell out criteria exp 1
- Clarity in program guidelines
- What rate system?
- Eliminate/leeway in no activity report (Group 3 as well)
- July to even year grant cutoff timeline for when activity can be reported for contracts in the middle
- SAC wants exceptions tracking by policy & where allowable
- Procedures to support paid invoice timelines for monthly vouchering

Group 3: Sec 6: Getting paid

- More options for advanced payment RCD example
- Pre-authorization for projects
- Account for delegation of authority w/in District
- Activating vs expenses incurred
- Support forms - what's needed why?

Group 2: Sec 4: Item budgeting expenses

- Visual chart for allowables, not, better define goods & services
- Liked grey areas flexibility
- Clearly define travel & training
- Reorganize to start w/ allowable
- Start w/ purpose of section, phase to audience

Group 4: Sec 8/9: Cost share & DIP

- Equip labor rates doesn't match up spell out the distinction
- Matrix of grant projects -> visual representation
- Clarify prioritization guidelines
- Cost share appeal combined w/ grant
- Non local control over prioritization through policy

- Disclosure for landowners for other grants
- Max compensation from state
- Cost Districts 30% rule?

our goals →
tion plan

- Efficiency
- De-duplication
- Remove waste
- Provide clarity

Common Vision & Goals

- Empower ^{Sec} CDs to be effective & efficient as partners
- Creates more answers than questions
- One stop clarity
- No more having to be "dug out"
- Clear rules
- Stand alone document w/links & resources
- Support locally-led conservation
- Sustainable - can be rebuilt w/min of effort
- Matrix, for example, could be easily modified
- Structure that has clear purpose for each step

- * - State grants like federal grants/audits by risk
- Spell out Criteria Cap 1
- Clarity in program guidelines
- Flat rate system?

Group
Sec. 3

- Climbing report
- July 10 timeline reports
- SAO w/ big pot
- Proceed timeline

Group
Sec. 6

- More options RCO example
- Pre-audits
- Account w/in Dis
- Activity
- Support



Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual

Effective July 1, ~~2024~~2025

*Adopted by the Washington State
Conservation Commission ~~May 18, 2023~~*

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Section 1: General Information

In this section, you'll learn about:

- ✓ The Washington State Conservation Commission
- ✓ This manual's purpose
- ✓ Where to get information
- ✓ Important things to know

About the Washington State Conservation Commission

The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) is the coordinating state agency for all 45 conservation districts in the state. SCC provides funding for and manages multiple grant and contract programs to support locally-led efforts by conservation districts, entities, and -cooperators and landowners to solve natural resource issues.

Grants and contracts administered by SCC originate from multiple sources, including but not limited to state, federal, and non-governmental entities. As such, multiple-additional requirements may apply to grant awards originating from the source of the funds as well as SCC requirements.

SCC was created in 1939 by the Washington State Legislature. The statutory authorities lie within RCW 89.08 and WAC 135. It is governed by a 10-member board that consists of:

- Two governor-appointed members.
- The directors (or designees) of four state agencies (Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Ecology, and Washington State University).
- Three conservation district representatives elected by members of the Washington State Association of Conservation Districts (WACD).
- The president of WACD.

SCC activities are required to follow state and federal guidelines for nondiscrimination based on race, creed, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, residence, veteran status, and disability. If you believe the office or its programs discriminate, please inform SCC's director.

Purpose of this Manual

This manual provides general information and requirements on program policy and procedures for requesting payments-reimbursements from SCC. Please note that the rules may vary depending on project types, programs, and are subject to change.

To determine what you can bill is eligible for reimbursement, refer to the agreement, this manual, and the programmatic guidelines applicable to your grant or contract. If you have questions about a grant

program or contract, please contact your regional manager, contract manager, [program manager](#), or a member of the financial staff.

Contact Information

Washington State Conservation Commission

Telephone: (360) 407-6200

FAX: (360) 407-6215

Web site: www.scc.wa.gov

E-mail: commission@scc.wa.gov

Mailing Address

PO Box 47721

Olympia, WA 98504-7721

Physical Address

Department of Ecology Building

300 Desmond Drive SE

Lacey, WA 98503

Please contact our office (360-407-6200) or TTY Relay (800-833-6384) to request this content in an alternate format.

About SCC

The State Conservation Commission (SCC) is a state agency that manages multiple grant programs to works to conserve natural resources on all lands in Washington state, through voluntary and incentive-based programs, in collaboration with conservation districts and other partners. SCC is the coordinating state agency for all 45 conservation districts (CDs) in Washington State. Together, the SCC and CDs provide voluntary, incentive-based programs that empower people to practice conservation and ensure healthy natural resources and agriculture for all.

Grants administered by SCC come from state sources so all state requirements may apply. SCC's activities are intended to follow state and federal guidelines for nondiscrimination based on race, creed, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, residence, veteran status, and disability. If the reader believes SCC or its programs discriminate, please inform SCC's director.

Purpose of this Manual

This manual offers general guidance on the reimbursement request process. Please be advised that the requirements may vary depending on the type of project, program, or any approved amendments. For specific details, refer to the programmatic guidelines and/or the grant agreement. Should you have any questions, kindly contact our fiscal staff or reach out to the programmatic or regional manager. Any items that are not specifically identified as eligible or ineligible are not eligible by default. Please reach out to SCC fiscal staff prior to incurring a cost not identified in this manual to ensure eligibility for reimbursement.

Important Things to Know

Specific programmatic guidelines and training videos are available on the SCC website.

Reimbursement Help

Billing forms, rates, examples, and links are available on the Grants, Contracts, & Finance section of the [SCC website](#). Online trainings can be located on the [Webinar](#) section of the SCC website. For contracts, an A-19 will be provided by SCC and all other forms can be found here.

Entities-Districts and Counties Must Pay First

SCC pays a grant recipient, through a reimbursement process. A district, county or other entity may request reimbursement only after paying employees and vendors. SCC does not provide money before vendors are paid, except as outlined in SCC's cash advance policy and when paying funds directly into escrow for land purchases. SCC will pay only for allowable costs, a cost is allowable if it is reasonable, necessary to complete the approved scope of work, eligible in the grant program, documented adequately, and incurred during the period of performance for the grant. A cost is considered reasonable if the work or materials and the cost reflect what a prudent person would have spent under the circumstances. Costs outside the period of performance are not reimbursable. SCC pays all grants and contracts through reimbursement. Entities may request reimbursement only after payment has been made to employees, landowners, participants, or vendors.

Payment of Allowable Costs

SCC will pay only for allowable costs. A cost is allowable if it's reasonable, necessary to complete the approved scope of work, allowable in the grant program, documented adequately, and incurred during the period of performance outlined in the project agreement. Costs outside the period of performance are not allowable. An expense must be vouchered for within the same fiscal year that the expense was incurred as directed in the [State Administrative and Accounting Manual](#) (SAAM). A cost is considered reasonable if the nature of the work or materials and the cost reflect what a prudent person would pay under the circumstances.

Reimbursement is Limited to ~~Out-of-Pocket Costs~~Allowable Expenditures

Reimbursement will be made on allowable ~~expenditures~~costs not to exceed the limits in accordance with the grant programmatic guidelines or terms of the contract. ~~Costs-Expenditures~~ in excess of SCC's reimbursement may be allowable for another funding source from another entity. Any ~~costs~~expenditures that were reimbursed by another entity are not eligible for reimbursement.

Use a Verifiable Payment Method

All payments must be made using a verifiable payment method in accordance with the State Auditor's Office policies. Keep all purchase receipts to provide a verifiable audit trail.

SCC Pays Promptly!

The policy of SCC is to promptly pay a completed reimbursement voucher. In most cases, vouchers are paid within 10 days of receiving a properly completed voucher.

~~Properly completed vouchers include all necessary documentation, accurate and correct calculations, and appropriate signatures. Reimbursement requests will not be paid until the district or entity provides satisfactory documentation to support the request.~~

Your Information is Public

All information and documentation submitted to SCC is subject to public review ([Revised Code of Washington 42.56](#)). SCC recommends that social security numbers and any personally identifiable information are removed from documents you submit.

Grant or Contract Number and Type

The grant or contract is assigned a unique identifying reference number. If the agreement is a grant, the fiscal year or biennium will be the first two numbers, the conservation district number the next two, and a two-letter designation indicating the program. If the agreement is a contract, the numbering will start with K, followed by the biennium four-digit code.

For example, a grant number will look like this: *biennium-conservation district number-program* (24-52-IM). A contract number will look like this: *biennium-contract number* (K2001).

The following is a list of potential program identifiers:

CE - CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program)

DAP – Disaster Assistance Program

IE - Irrigation Efficiencies

IM - Implementation

FH – Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency

FR - Fire Recovery

LT - Livestock TA

NR - Natural Resource Investments

PE - Professional Engineering

RGP – Riparian Grant Program

RP - RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program)

RPP - Riparian Plant Propagation

SFF - Sustainable Farms and Fields

SH - Shellfish Investments.

~~SRF – Salmon Riparian Funding~~

TO-10 - Task Order Program

VSP - Voluntary Stewardship Program

WFF – Wildlife Friendly Fencing

Statewide Vendor Number

All entities are required to have a statewide vendor number to receive payments. SCC limits payments to electronic fund transfer (EFT). Visit the [Office of Financial Management website](#) to register, make changes, and/or establish a statewide vendor number.

Tax Related Information (1099-MISC)

[Federal tax regulations](#) require that conservation districts issue 1099-MISC tax forms to all non-employees to whom payments exceeding \$600 per calendar year are made. This includes payments for professional services engineering/design, cultural resources, attorneys, etc. and rent for office space. For information on cost share payments made in reimbursement to participants, please see

SCC District Operations Brief: [IRS 1099 Reporting and Forms](#). For further information and assistance on the issuance of 1099's, please contact your [local IRS Office](#).

Electronic [Signatures](#)

SCC has a policy to allow electronic signatures on grant and contract forms. SCC Electronic Signature Forms List contained in the policy outlines which documents may be signed electronically and which require a wet signature. Districts or entities [who want to use electronic signatures](#), must have a policy in place allowing electronic signatures.

Section 2: Grants and Contracts

In this section, you'll learn about:

- ✓ Conservation District Master Contract
- ✓ General contracts
- ✓ Effective dates
- ✓ Terms and conditions
- ✓ Addendum/scope of work
- ✓ Prior authorization
- ✓ Changes to grant and contract
- ✓ Termination and suspension
- ✓ Appeals
- ✓ Debarment and suspension

Conservation District Master Contract

SCC enters a funding relationship with conservation districts each biennium through the master contract. The master contract contains the general terms and conditions under which funding occurs. Specific projects-awards are then added using a separate addendum for each funded programgrant.

SCC will provide the conservation district master contract. It includes all requirements authorizing work, the terms and conditions, instructions on billing, and a section for approval signatures. ~~The original will be kept in the district office, and a copy will be sent to SCC fiscal staff.~~ For conservation districts, it is preferred that the chair of the board signs the contract. However, any individual authorized on the district's Authorized Signature form may sign. SCC will accept electronic signatures on the conservation district master contract.

Failure by the conservation district to perform according to the scope of work, or to comply with state or federal requirements, may result in the reduction of funds or the termination of the grant or contract.

Grants and Contracts

The following applies to ~~both~~ grants, contracts, and master contracts:

Effective and Expiration Dates

Effective date means the earliest date any allowable-eligible costs may be incurred. Costs incurred before the effective date will not be reimbursed.

The expiration date is the last day when costs may be incurred and are allowable-eligible for reimbursement. No costs incurred after the expiration date are allowableeligible. All supplies, materials, or equipment must be in hand by close of business on the last date of the grant or contract.

Terms and Conditions

The Terms and Conditions of the master contract or any other SCC-issued contract are attorney general approved and are not a negotiable component of SCC contracts.

Prior Authorization for Grants

At the beginning of biennium or fiscal year, prior authorization to incur costs on specific grant programs may be provided before the conservation district master contract approval. SCC's executive director or designee would grant such an approval. Work can start once SCC gives written prior authorization. However, prior authorization does not guarantee award of a grant. But it does make such allowable costs reimbursable if the grant is awarded.

Specific prior authorization conditions apply:

- Any work performed must be consistent with the grant program addendum included with the master contract.
- Expenses claimed under the prior authorization must be supported by documentation of staff time and proof of expenses incurred and submitted to SCC with the first reimbursement request under the grant ~~contract~~.
- Costs incurred before the effective date of the prior authorization, and costs for work or expenses not consistent with the terms of the authorization, are not allowable for reimbursement. Such ineligible costs will be at the expense of the entity.
- The prior authorization letter must be included in the grant file.
- A prior authorization may be prohibited or further limited under each separate grant program.

Addenda and Amendments to Master Contracts

The work agreed to under a grant addendum, or contract may change during the life of the contract.

- An addendum is a written document detailing the additions and supplements to the original terms of the ~~grant~~ master contract.
- An amendment to the addendum is how SCC formalizes these changes, and it becomes a part of the contract.
- Any subsequent amendments to the addendum are numbered sequentially over the life of the contract.

Amendments to all Contracts

An amendment is necessary whenever there is:

- A revision in the intermediate outcomes or ~~objectives~~ scope of work of the project.
- A decrease or increase in the grant or contract amount.
- Whenever the expiration date is extended.

An amendment is NOT required for administrative adjustments such as changes in address, phone number, or the authorized signature form. Administrative changes must still be reported to SCC. If you have any questions, please contact your regional manager or financial staff member.

The SCC fiscal staff must sign the grant addendum. All amendments must be signed by both SCC and the district. A copy will be sent-emailed to the district for their grant or contract files.

Budget Revision

If there's a need to redistribute costs-funds among the intermediate outcomes of the budget grant or contract, submit a Budget Revision Form to SCC. This document must be submitted by a person authorized to sign grant or contract documents per the authorized signature form on file. If a budget revision is approved, the district or entity will receive a copy of the amendment documenting the change.

A budget revision may not be allowable by the conditions of each specific grant program or contract.

Reporting Significant Developments

Events with significant impact on the project may occur at any time. SCC must be informed as soon as there are any problems, delays, changes in staff, or adverse conditions that will materially affect the ability to meet project objectives, intermediate outcomes, time schedules, cost share implementation, or project tasks within established time periods.

This disclosure must be accompanied by a statement of the action taken or proposed, and any assistance needed from SCC to resolve the situation. Please work with your regional manager or program manager at SCC to provide this information in a timely manner.

Termination and Suspension

(Restated from SCC contract terms and conditions)

SCC may suspend all, or part of, the contract and withhold further payments or prohibit the incurring of additional obligations of funds if we have reason to believe that fraud, abuse, or violation of the law has occurred on the part of any conservation district, district supervisor, or subcontractor in the performance of the contract. SCC may suspend all, or part, of the contract if we determine a failure to comply with any material term of the contract, whether stated in a statute, regulation, plan, application, or elsewhere.

If the project is not initiated within four months after the effective date of the contract, or by any date mutually agreed upon in writing, SCC may suspend the grant funding-under-the-contractor contract.

- **Suspension** means the temporary withdrawal of the authority to obligate previously awarded project funds pending, either corrective action or termination.
- **Termination** means permanent withdrawal — before the expiration date — of the authority to obligate previously awarded project funds. It also means the voluntary relinquishment of that authority by the contract holder.
 - Termination does not include:
 - Withdrawal of funds awarded based on an underestimate of the unobligated balance in a prior period.
 - Withdrawal of the unobligated balance at contract expiration.
 - Refusal to extend/renew a contract or award additional funds.

Upon a decision by SCC to suspend or terminate a grant or contract, notification of the suspension or termination will be made in writing. Suspension or termination for withdrawal of funding will be effective the date written in the letter. SCC will send written notice of suspension or termination to the

conservation district by email and by certified mail to the authorized signer of the contract at the address provided in the notifications section of the master agreement. Suspension or termination for withdrawal of funding will be effective the date listed in the letter. Costs incurred during a suspension or after termination of a contract are not allowable unless expressly authorized in the notice of suspension or termination.

SCC may prescribe one or more actions under suspension or termination. These may include, but are not limited to one or more of these actions:

- Temporarily withhold cash payments pending correction of the deficiency.
- Disallow all or part of the cost of the activity or action not in compliance.
- Request repayment of all or part of the funds already disbursed to the conservation district or entity.
- Withhold further grant or contract awards.
- Take other legally available remedies.

In some cases, allowable expenses may exist after formal suspension or termination. Costs incurred during suspension or after termination that may be allowable include:

- Are necessary and not reasonably avoidable are allowable if the costs result from obligations which were properly incurred by the conservation district before the effective date of suspension or termination.
- Were not in anticipation of the suspension, and, in the case of a termination, are non-cancellable.
- Would have been allowable if the grant or contract had not been suspended or terminated.

Appeals

Under termination and suspension, a request may be made, and an opportunity may be provided for a hearing, appeal, or other administrative proceedings. SCC will make determinations of cost eligibility, to disallow costs, and to ensure compliance with contract terms and conditions and program guidelines. The written decision of SCC will be final unless a written appeal to SCC's executive director is received within 30 days of the receipt of the decision.

In connection with appeal of any proceeding, the opportunity to be heard and to offer evidence in support of this appeal will be provided. The decision of the executive director will be made within 30 days of the receipt of the appeal and reported to SCC members at [their next regularly scheduled meeting](#).

Appeals from the executive director's determination will be in accordance with procedures outlined in the General Terms and Conditions included in the conservation district master contract or other awarded contract. Prior to a final decision, the work is expected to continue to progress on the project according to all terms of the contract, meaning that the decision to terminate or suspend doesn't become effective until all appeals are exhausted.

Administrative costs and other expenses incurred as part of an unsuccessful appeal are not allowable.

~~Please refer to the Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) guidelines for bidding, purchases and contracting. The guidelines can be found on [MRSC's website](#).~~

Debarment and Suspension

When federal grant funds are used to pay for all or a portion of goods or services, federal regulations require that the grantee ensure compliance with:

- State laws and entity policies related to procurement. Federal procurement requirements (see below) apply if there is no corresponding state law covering bid requirements.
- Suspension and Debarment (Federal Excluded Parties) on the [System for Award Management](#) website (this list is different than the one maintained by the State Department of Labor and Industries).
- Davis-Bacon Act (prevailing wage) requirements.

A [SAM \(System for Award Management\)](#) search must be completed prior to entering into any contractual arrangement. When the search is completed for each contractor or vendor, print the page from the website and place into the contracting file. Make sure the date and time is printed in the header or footer of the document.

Not having the dated search documents printed and, in the grant, or contract file has been an automatic audit finding from the State Auditor in the past.

In accordance with [RCW 39.04.350](#), before award of a public works contract, a bidder must meet the following responsibility criteria to be considered a responsible bidder and qualified to be awarded a public works project.

- One of the requirements is: Not be disqualified from bidding on any public works contract under RCW [39.06.010](#) or [RCW 39.12.065\(3\)](#). Violations of RCW 39.12.065(3) can be found [here](#).
 - Note that this is for state debarment, not federal. The entity ~~should-must~~ print [or save the electronic record of the](#) ~~the~~ search results to prove the contractor was not debarred at the time of bidding.
- ~~Please refer to the Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) guidelines for bidding, purchases and contracting. The guidelines can be found on [MRSC's website](#).~~

⊖

It is the sole responsibility of conservation districts to complete and document a SAM search and a State Labor & Industries search (link above) before awarding public works project contracts or subcontracting with any funding from SCC.

SCC strongly recommends the district conduct SAM and State Labor & Industries searches for all contractors or subcontractors for all funding awards for projects, regardless of funding source. All participants should be searched on the SAM system before any cost share project is approved for funding, regardless of funding source.

Guidance from the Washington State Auditor's Office

Compliance Requirements – Suspension and Debarment: Non-federal entities are prohibited from contracting with or making subawards under covered transactions to parties that are suspended or debarred. “Covered transactions” include contracts for goods and services awarded under a non-procurement transaction (e.g., grant or cooperative agreement) that are expected to equal or exceed \$25,000 or meet certain other criteria as specified in 2 CFR section 180.220. All non-procurement transactions entered into by a passthrough entity (i.e., subawards to subrecipients), irrespective of award amount, are considered covered transactions, unless they are exempt as provided in 2 CFR section 180.215. When a non-federal entity enters into a covered transaction with an entity at a lower tier, the nonfederal entity must verify that the entity, as defined in 2 CFR section 180.995 and agency adopting regulations, is not suspended or debarred or otherwise excluded from participating in the transaction.

This verification may be accomplished by

- (1) checking the System for Award Management (SAM) Exclusions maintained by the General Services Administration (GSA) and available at SAM.gov | Home (click on Search Record, then click on Advanced SearchExclusions) (Note: The OMB guidance at 2 CFR Part 180 and agency implementing regulations still refer to the SAM Exclusions as the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS)),
- (2) (2) collecting a certification from the entity, or
- (3) (3) adding a clause or condition to the covered transaction with that entity

(2 CFR section 180.300). Compliance Supplement 2024 3-I-3 May 2024 Compliance Requirements - Procurement And Suspension And Debarment Non-federal entities receiving contracts from the federal government are required to comply with the contract clause at FAR 52.209-6 before entering into a subcontract that will exceed \$30,000, other than a subcontract for a commercially available off-the-shelf item. Source of Governing Requirements – Suspension and Debarment The requirements for nonprocurement suspension and debarment are contained in OMB guidance in 2 CFR Part 180, which implements Executive Orders 12549 and 12689, “Debarment and Suspension;” federal awarding agency regulations in Title 2 of the CFR adopting/implementing the OMB guidance in 2 CFR Part 180; program legislation; and the terms and conditions of the award. Most federal agencies have adopted or implemented 2 CFR Part 180, generally by relocating their associated agency rules in Title 2 of the CFR. Appendix II to the Supplement includes the current CFR citations for all agencies adoption or implementation of the nonprocurement suspension and debarment guidance. Government-wide requirements related to suspension and debarment and doing business with suspended or debarred subcontractors under cost reimbursement contracts under the FAR are contained in 48 CFR section 9.405-2(b) and the clause at 48 CFR section 52.209-6.

~~Suspension and Debarment:~~ ~~Recipients of federal grants are prohibited from contracting with or making sub-awards to parties that are suspended or debarred from doing business with the federal government.~~

~~For vendor contracts of \$25,000 or more and all sub-awards, the conservation district must ensure the vendor or sub-recipient is not suspended or debarred. The conservation district must check for suspended or debarred parties by reviewing the federal System for Award Management (SAM) issued by the U.S. General Services Administration. This requirement must be met prior to making the first payment to the contractor, vendor, or sub-recipient.~~

The suspension and debarment requirements apply to all contracts paid over \$25,000 and not only applied to the main contractor. The conservation district is responsible for communication with all contractors that they need to check the suspension and debarment status for any subcontractors or sub-recipients.

Section 3: Compliance

In this section, you'll learn about:

- ✓ Monitoring program compliance
- ✓ Invoicing
- ~~✓ No activity~~
- ✓ Supplemental activity reports
- ✓ Final report
- ✓ Close-out
- ✓ Recovery of payments
- ✓ Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (CAPP)

Monitoring Program Compliance

Progress made under the grant or contract is monitored in several ways and may include but is not limited to ~~payment reimbursement~~ requests, activity reports, final reports, and site visits.

Vouchering

SCC requires grant vouchering for reimbursement each calendar month when expenditures have been incurred, unless specified otherwise in the contract. Contracts may bill monthly, quarterly or upon completion of deliverables as specified in the contract.-

~~All reimbursement vouchers must be submitted by the 20th day of the month following the month when All monthly reimbursement vouchers, where expenditures have been incurred, must be submitted by the 20th day of the month. All expenditures must be vouchered for within 60 days of the district paying the expenses. The date paid must be included on each invoice or receipt to document when the expense was paid. Documentation may include the district's Treasurer's Report, handwritten date paid on the invoice or receipt or invoice or notated paid stamp. exceptions will be approved on a case-by-case basis. June vouchers, regardless of funding source, are required by July 10 of each year for SCC to be able to meet our deadlines established by the Office of Financial Management. expenses were incurred by the conservation district or entity. Final vouchers are required by July 10 of each year to abide by the deadline established by the Office of Financial Management.~~

Properly completed reimbursement vouchers include all necessary documentation, accurate and correct calculations, and appropriate signatures. Reimbursement requests will not be paid until the district or entity provides satisfactory documentation to support the request.

An exception to this policy may be made for contracts which SCC will allow vouchers to be submitted once a deliverable is completed rather than monthly. This will be specified in the contract language.

If after 90 days there has been no activity on a grant, a status check by your regional manager, program manager or fiscal staff may occur.

Timing of Expenditures

Expenditures will be considered allowable for vouchering when they are paid. Washington State Auditor's Office (SAO) provides guidance as to when expenditures are recognized as "paid" in the BARS Cash-Basis Manual:

*Expenditures 3.1.7.40 **Basis of accounting***

*Basis of accounting refers to **when** revenues and expenditures are recognized and reported in the financial statements.*

*Revenues are recognized only when cash is received and **expenditures are recognized when chargeable against the report year's budget appropriations** as required by state law. This generally results in revenues being recognized when delivered to the government or government's agent and **expenditures being recognized when paid. Warrants and checks are considered paid when issued.***

An exception to expenditure recognition would be during any open period after the close of the fiscal year when expenditures can be charged against the previous period for claims incurred in the previous period.

Open periods are required by statute for cities (RCW [35.33.151](#) and RCW [35A.33.150](#)) and allowed for counties (RCW [36.40.200](#)). Special purpose districts which use the county or a city as their treasurer may use the same open-period as their treasurer.

Therefore, an eligible expenditure must be vouchered when a warrant or check is issued and thus the expenditure is considered paid.

Scenarios

Goods or Services

Vendor or contractor expenditures must be vouchered when the invoice is paid by the district. A copy of the invoice or receipt must be included with the voucher.

Credit Cards, Electronic Fund Transfers (EFT) and Purchase Accounts

Credit Card, EFT and purchase account expenditures must be vouchered when the vendor invoice or statement is paid by the district. A copy of the itemized receipt or invoice ~~should~~must be included with the voucher to support the charges. A copy of the account statement will not be accepted as adequate supporting documentation if it does not include itemized charges.

Travel Vouchers

Travel expenditures ~~should~~must be vouchered after travel has ~~commenced~~ **concluded** and all expenditures have been paid. All travel-related expenditures ~~should~~must be summarized on an A20 Travel Expense Voucher form or district form containing all the same required information. Itemized receipts are required for airfare, transportation service, vehicle rental, parking, and

lodging. Note: SCC will limit lodging reimbursement to the applicable lodging per diem rate. SCC will reimburse district meals at the OFM approved per diem rates and actual mileage at the current standard ~~mileage reimbursement~~ rate. No receipts are required for meals or mileage.

Fiscal Year-End

All expenditures must be paid and received by the district by June 30th. This includes, but is not limited to, any expenditures that occur through credit card purchases, purchase accounts, vendors, and contractors.

No expenses can be reimbursed from a prior fiscal year. All expenses must be paid for and received in the fiscal year they were incurred regardless of funding source.

This does not apply to cost share reimbursements ~~or district implemented projects~~. These costs may be vouchered for when BMP(s) are completed in accordance with the grant funding requirements. All cost share funding and district implemented projects must be vouchered for and completed by the end of the fiscal year if funded through operating funds or the end of the biennium if funded through capital funding.

No Activity Voucher

~~To minimize the return of unspent funds at the end of a fiscal year or biennium, we must have accurate information on grant spending throughout the year. Monthly vouchering allows all of us to remain on top of the workload of preparing and processing vouchers throughout the year and allows for any issues to be quickly resolved as they arise. Monthly vouchering helps districts and entities manage their cash flow.~~

~~Vouchering is required even in months when no expenditures have been incurred for all grant programs or contracts. This is done by submitting a "No Activity" voucher. If there's a zero balance in the grant or contract, a "No Activity" voucher is required monthly until the grant or contract is officially closed. By submitting a "No Activity" voucher, the district or entity is certifying that no expenditures have been incurred for the voucher period. A district or entity may not submit costs for reimbursement on a later voucher that they certified no activity occurred. Specific grant programs such as Task Orders may be exempt from filing "No Activity" report and the exemption will be detailed in the specific grant programmatic guidelines.~~

~~This would not apply to cost share funding or district implemented projects. A "No Activity" voucher may be submitted for technical assistance or TA for each month the district does not incur technical assistance costs while the cost share project is underway. Once funded BMP(s) are completed, the district may then submit a voucher for the reimbursement of the cost share for the period during which a "No Activity" voucher was submitted. The district must voucher for technical assistance costs on the monthly voucher in which the time was incurred.~~

~~All cost share and district implemented projects must be completed within the fiscal and biennial requirements tied to the grant funding.~~

Supplemental Activity Reports

SCC reserves the right to request activity reports and supplemental activity reports at any time. These may be based upon legislative, budget, or other reporting requests made to SCC. If an activity report is not received by the due date, we will withhold payment of any subsequent voucher reimbursement requests until the information is received.

Final Report

SCC reserves the right to request final reports for any grant program or contract. A final report and other grant or contract-closing documentation must be submitted within 10 days of the end of the grant or contract, or other date specified. Final payments and any new grant or contract payments will not be made until all final documents and requested information is received.

Close Out

“Close out” is the process by which all administrative matters relative to the grant or contract are reconciled to close the file. SCC will close out the project when all applicable administrative and programmatic requirements of the grant or contract have been met, or when the project has been terminated.

- SCC requires that you submit a [Grant Close-out Form](#) or [Contract Close-out Form](#) with the final voucher reimbursement request.
- Once we receive the close-out paperwork, the grant or contract is closed.

Failure by a conservation district or contracting entity to return the close-out paperwork will result in withheld payments on current grant or contract vouchers, and delays in executing future grants or contracts.

Final payments will NOT be made until all required documentation is on file with the appropriate authorized signatures.

Close Out Does Not Affect:

- SCC's right to disallow costs and recover funds based on a later audit or other review.
- The conservation district's obligation to return any money due because of later refunds, corrections, or other transactions.
- Records retention and access to records required under the grant or contract.
- Property management procedures under the grant or contract.
- Audit procedures under the grant or contract.

Close-out Process

Within 10 days of the expiration date, all financial, performance, and other reports required under the grant or contract are due to SCC. Required final reports may include, but are not limited to:

- Final ~~payment reimbursement~~ voucher.
- Invention disclosure (if applicable).
- Close-out form.
- If applicable, any programmatic specific supplemental or final reports.

Recovery of ~~Payments~~ Reimbursements

- All ~~payments reimbursement~~ under a grant or contract are subject to final audit by SCC or a designee of SCC.
- SCC will be reimbursed for any unauthorized or unallowable expenditures charged.
- The right to retain monies paid as reimbursement payments is contingent upon satisfactory performance under the terms of the grant or contract including satisfactory completion of the projects described in the Scope of Work.
- For any reason, a failure to perform obligations required of it by the grant or contract, SCC may, within its sole discretion, require repayment to SCC all grant or contract funds disbursed for those parts of the project rendered “worthless” in accordance with the conservation district master contract and the Contract for Cost Share.

Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (for conservation districts)

The Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (CAPP) is a program for Washington Conservation Districts pertaining to accountability requirements.

Non compliance by a A-district not meeting all ~~legal accountability requirements contained in~~ CAPP Standard One requirements may affect funding eligibility and funding level by action of SCC.

Please refer to SCC’s website for all [CAPP](#) related information.

Section 4: Reimbursable Expenses

In this section, you'll learn about:

- ✓ Staff or expenditures shared between two districts
- ✓ Goods and services
- ✓ Payroll
- ✓ Travel and transportation
- ✓ Equipment or tool use allowance
- ✓ Donations
- ✓ Cost eligibility
- ✓ Overhead
- ✓ Employee composite rate

Staff or expenditures shared between two conservation districts

In instances where two conservation districts share resources (Staff, office, subscriptions etc) the CDs must enter into an Interagency agreement and SCC must receive a copy of the Agreement at the start of each biennium. The Agreement must identify which CD is the primary and receives payment from the second CD for staff services. Any costs shared between two conservation districts and charged to SCC grants or contracts, must be documented and billed to the ~~other~~ correct conservation district per the agreement. ~~A current Interagency Agreement must also be provided at the beginning of each biennium unless changes are made during the biennium. If the Agreement is amended at any time during the biennium, a copy of the amendment must be sent to SCC.~~

For example: If conservation district A has all the employees and pays all the invoices for a project, but those costs are to be split between conservation district A and conservation district B, conservation district A needs to send conservation district B an invoice with supporting documentation that clearly identifies which of the expenditures/cost that conservation district A paid that belong to conservation district B.

Conservation district A pays expenditures for the following:

- Staff A – 80 hours of time charged to Implementation Grant (comp rate of \$50.00) - \$4,000 total.
- Staff B – 80 hours of time charged to Implementation Grant (comp rate of \$60.00) - \$4,800 total.
- Xerox Invoice \$100.00 total.
- Office Rent \$2,000.00 total.
- But 50% of each of those expenditures belong to conservation district B, conservation district A would need to invoice conservation district B and provide supporting documentation including copies of signed and approved timesheets and invoices.
- Staff A – 80 hours of time charged to Implementation Grant (comp rate of \$50.00) - \$4,000 total - \$2,000.00 - 50% charged to conservation district A and \$2,000.00 -50% charged to conservation district B.

- Staff B – 80 hours of time charged to Implementation Grant (comp rate of \$60.00) - \$4,800 total - \$2,400.00 - 50% charged to conservation district A and \$2,400.00 -50% charged to conservation district B.
- Xerox Invoice \$100.00 total - \$50.00 – 50% charged to conservation district A and \$50.00 – 50% charged to conservation district B.
- Office Rent \$2,000.00 total - \$1,000.00 – 50% charged to conservation district A and \$1,000.00 – 50% charged to conservation district B.

Supporting documentation includes copies of invoices or timesheet and totaled on a conservation district and included with the invoice/reimbursement request and SCC requirements listed in this manual.

Goods and Services

The conservation district or entity must retain the original invoice or receipt in their grant or contract file for all administrative goods and services purchased. Administrative goods and services are not reimbursable expenses under some grant programs. Check individual [programmatic guidelines](#) for more information.

To receive reimbursement, invoices must be in accordance with the requirements under SAAM. The following must be included on invoices in order to meet state requirements: Payee name and address, invoice number, invoice date, dates when services were provided, total amount and description of goods or services and date payment was made.

Here is some additional guidance from SAO for Accounts Payable.

Payroll

Employee time directly related to the approved scope is reimbursable. The ~~reportable-reimbursable~~ amount is the employee's regular rate of pay, including taxes and benefits. Taxes and benefits are allowable only if you pay them when they are due. Use SCC provided [Grant and Billing Composite Rate Form](#) to determine the appropriate billable rate of pay. ~~An updated Grant and Billing Composite Rate form is required to be updated every January for each employee, for both districts and counties. Time and material contracts will bill hourly rates at the rates specified in the Contract.~~

At no time is a loaded composite rate eligible for grant or [VSP](#) contract reimbursement. A loaded composite rate is an employee composite rate that adds to, or artificially inflates, actual or reasonably estimated costs or charges above and beyond the actual costs paid out to, or on behalf of, the employee's hours worked. Acceptable components of an employee's composite rate are salary or wages, payroll related benefits such as payroll taxes, unemployment insurance, employee benefits such as medical insurance, earned sick, ~~or~~ vacation, or military leave accrual, Social Security & Medicare withholding, and retirement benefits. Other costs such as gym memberships, equipment, supplies, training, or inflating the employee's salary or wages, are not acceptable on a composite rate for SCC funding sources.

Timesheets

Payroll-related costs charged to SCC grants or [VSP](#) contracts must be documented on a timesheet and included with the reimbursement request, along with these criteria:

- Reflect an after-the-fact determination of the actual activity of each employee.
- Account for the total activity for which employees are compensated.
- Be signed and dated by the individual employee and by a direct supervisor having firsthand knowledge of the activities performed by the employee.
- Conservation district manager's time sheets must be signed by a board member or other authorized signatory per the [Authorized Signature](#) form on file with SCC.
- Be prepared at least monthly and coincide with one or more pay periods.
- Not be budget estimates or other distributions based on a percentage before the work was performed.
- In the instance where an employee is shared between two districts or is employed by one district but is charging time to another district, the timesheet must be signed by the district that employees them, then an invoice must be provided to the district that is being billed that lists all details to document that district A billed district B and for what services. An interagency agreement must also be provided to SCC at the start of each biennium.

Travel and Transportation

If travel costs are allowable for your grant or contract, they are limited to the [state per diem rates](#). [Districts must have a travel policy in place with established meal periods.](#) You must maintain a detailed travel log, which includes the traveler's name with dates, [departure and return](#) times, locations, business purpose, and itemized travel costs. This information may be needed when requesting reimbursement for personal vehicle use.

For complete information regarding state travel regulations, visit the [Office of Financial Management](#). All rules and guidelines outlined below are subject to OFM's regulations. These regulations are frequently updated and posted to OFM's website. SCC will communicate all changes to districts as we are notified. It is the district [or](#) entities' responsibility to comply with all OFM rules.

[Out of country and out of state travel must be approved in advance of the travel taking place. The district or entity must provide a summary outlining how the out of state travel is an integral part of their program/or training for the staff person. This request must be sent to the SCC program manager to review the request. If approved, the request will be sent on to fiscal for final approval so fiscal can review and also provide guidance on the per diem rates and process. Areas that are exempt from this "travel to counties and/or cities in the states of Idaho and Oregon that are contiguous to the border between Washington-Idaho or Washington-Oregon, or b\) out-of-state employees traveling within the same state as their official workstation for travel reimbursement shall not be considered out-of-state." \(per SAAM pg 1048\).](#)

[If a district incurs a no-show fee, early or late checkout or departure fees, the district must provide a detailed request explaining why the incurred fee was necessary in the course of their travel. These fees will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.](#)

Meal Per Diem Reimbursement

Reimbursements for meals are limited to the [state per diem meal rate](#) in effect for the area of travel. [Meal per diem rates cover basic meal cost, tax, tips and incidentals.](#) Meals — if provided by another entity, conference, or meeting — are not reimbursable. Per diem reimbursement may only be claimed for conservation district board members, associate board members, [VSP counties, AmeriCorps members under contract with the district](#) and district staff. [Those eligible for per diem reimbursement must pay for the costs and then be reimbursed by the district or entity. The district may not pay for the per diem directly](#) Contractors, volunteers, and district partners are not eligible for per diem reimbursement [on SCC grants. Contracts with other entities may allow this based upon the terms of the contract.](#) SCC will only reimburse the state per diem rate, not actual cost for all meals eligible for reimbursement.

For non-overnight travel assignments, the following two criteria must be met to receive a meal per diem allowance:

1. **Eleven-Hour Rule:** A traveler may be reimbursed for meal expenses when the traveler has been in travel status for at least eleven hours.
2. **In travel status during the entire meal period:** Travelers must be in travel status during the entire agency-determined meal period(s) to qualify to collect meal payments for meal(s). The traveler may not stop for a meal just to meet the eleven-hour rule.

For overnight travel assignments, all meals are to be reimbursed at the rate in effect for the area where the traveler stops for sleep. The meal reimbursement rate for the last day of travel (return day) would continue to be the rate for the location where the traveler last stopped for sleep.

[The Internal Revenue Service \(IRS\) has determined meal allowances and reimbursements to employees are taxable fringe benefits when overnight travel does not occur. These reimbursements are to be included in the taxable wages no later than the month following reimbursement.](#)

Lodging and Transportation Per Diem Reimbursement

Reimbursements for lodging are limited to the lower of the actual cost or [the state per diem lodging rate](#) and supported by documentation submitted at the time of the reimbursement request. [The lodging per diem rate covers the basic room cost, resort/amenity fees, cleaning fees and services fees. Lodging taxes are reimbursable beyond the maximum per diem.](#) If per diem rates are not available to the traveler, an [Exceeding Per Diem Form](#) is required. This form must be approved by the district manager or board **in advance** of the stay.

The portion of allowable transportation costs that are directly attributed to the grant or contract can be reimbursed using one of the following methods:

- **Mileage:** Allowable costs are limited to the current state mileage rate. [The mileage rates include the variable costs of operating a vehicle, such as the cost of gas, oil, tires, maintenance and repairs, as well as the fixed costs of operating the vehicle, such as](#)

insurance, registration and depreciation or lease payments. The mileage rates do not include the cost of parking and tolls.

- No other vehicle costs including insurance, fuel, oil changes, repairs, maintenance, or lease payments will be allowed unless an exception is made by SCC.
- **Vehicle Rental:** Reimbursement is limited to actual rental and fuel costs.
- Parking and bridge tolls, transportation services (taxis, shuttles, Lyft/Uber, ferries, etc.), checked baggage and mandatory lodging fees for internet access are reimbursable expenses. For Lyft/Uber, tips are also reimbursable.
- **Receipts:** All receipts for lodging and expenses paid for on an employee's personal credit card must be submitted on a A-20 Travel Expense Voucher request form with the rest of the grant or contract voucher. If the lodging is directly billed to the district or entity using the district or entity's credit card, a travel voucher is not required but the lodging receipt is. For all employee travel, departure and return trip times must be documented on the travel voucher request form in order to determine per diem eligibility.

Peer to Peer Rental (VRBO, Airbnb)

- Lodging must be at the per diem rate for the county the traveler is staying the night in
- Lodging will not be authorized if the peer-to-peer rental is not a commercialized lodging facility
- All fees associated with peer-to-peer property rentals are to be added into per diem rate based on a daily cost. Reimbursement for the nightly rate plus associated fees will not exceed the per diem rate for the area. Examples of fees are: cleaning fees, service fees, amenity fees, etc. Fees will be divided by the number of days employee/s are staying at the rental to determine the cost per day for the fees.
- SCC will not reimburse for any cancellation or damage fees
- Receipts must show the total itemized amount of fees, taxes and nightly rate as well as location of rental property
- When there are multiple employees staying at the facility, the nightly rate plus fees will be divided amongst each employee. The district must pay for the cost of the rental with agency card and one employee cannot incur the total cost of the rental and be reimbursed for the cost
 - OFM guidance can be found here.
- Districts are responsible for calculating the daily cost of the rental and ensuring that the daily cost does not exceed per diem.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has determined meal allowances and reimbursements to employees are taxable fringe benefits when overnight travel does not occur. These reimbursements are to be included in the taxable wages no later than the month following reimbursement.

Donations

~~Conservation districts may receive donations. Donations are defined as "third-party contributions." The following rules apply to any donations received:~~

- ~~• Donations are provided at no cost.~~
- ~~• Must be allowable within the project.~~
- ~~• Cannot be reimbursed.~~

- ~~Cannot include items previously purchased with SCC grants.~~
- ~~Cannot be reported on more than one grant.~~
- ~~Must be backed up with a detailed log.~~

For conservation districts, donations are not a reimbursable grant or contract expense. As a reminder, conservation districts may not make donations of any kind and request reimbursement from SCC. The Washington State Constitution prohibits the gift of public funds in two sections, Article 8, Sections 5 and 7, and Article 12, Section 9.

Cost Eligibility

SCC offers grant programs funded through both Operating and Capital funding. Each program is subject to specific proviso language and program guidelines. The eligible expenditures vary based on the funding type and the guidelines for each grant. For more details, please refer to the table of common expenditures here.

Ineligible ~~Costs~~Expenditures

Review this policy and any specific programmatic guidelines for allowable and ineligible ~~costs~~expenditures. Do not include ineligible ~~costs-expenditures~~ in the billing as either expenditure or a non-reimbursable amount.

Some examples include:

- Bad debts, including any losses arising from uncollectible accounts or claims.
- Ceremonial expenses, such as refreshments or other costs not tied to a business purpose.
- Costs billed to another funding source, except when being used as a non-reimbursable match amount.
- Contributions to a contingency or reserve.
- Depreciation of facilities or equipment.
- Deposits, all costs must be paid for in full and goods received prior to requesting reimbursement. Deposits or partially paid invoices are not a reimbursable expense.
- Duplication of costs, the work to be performed under the grant or contract does not duplicate any work charged against any other grant, contract, subcontract, or other source.
- Entertainment, costs of amusements, WACD auction items, social activities, and incidental costs relating to them (such as meals, beverages, lodgings, rentals, transportation, and gratuities).
- Fines and penalties, including late fees charged by vendors, and any costs resulting from violations of, or failure to comply with federal, state, and local laws.
- Lobbying, or expenses related to lobbying.

- Interest and other financial costs, interest on borrowings (however represented), bond accounts, cost of financing and refinancing operations, and legal and professional fees paid in connection to them, are unallowable except when authorized by state legislation.
- Contributions and, donations, ~~and sponsorships.~~
- Meals with meetings.
- Mortgage payments
- Residential rent,
- Speaker fees and any travel costs associated with hiring a speaker for an event.
- Host stipends for producers holding workshops.
- Gift cards
- Payments to an equipment replacement fund.
- Tuition for quarter, semester or academic year education where class credit is given is not allowable. Trainings and certificate courses required to perform essential job duties may be allowable with prior approval for certain grant programs.
- Vehicle insurance, fuel for vehicles, tires, maintenance, or lease costs, which are already included in the state mileage reimbursement rate. Depending on the grant program, specific lease approvals may be approved.

Allowable Reimbursable Expenditures

Unless otherwise identified in the project award, grant program, or contract or programmatic guidelines, the expenses listed below are considered allowable for reimbursement if funds are available. SCC may request at any time during the grant or contract period or for a period in accordance with the [Secretary of State Records Retention Schedule](#), a copy of any receipt, verification of purpose, inventory list, bank statement, or other document, as material backup for an expense. Any expense appearing to be unreasonable for the area or service is subject to further evaluation and justification. All expenditures must have been fully paid and received prior to requesting reimbursement from SCC.

With any of the expenses below, check with SCC to ensure it will be covered, particularly if the expense is not normally seen, presents a unique circumstance, or is unusually high. Classify these expenses as “Goods and Services” when establishing a budget and submitting reimbursement requests. These categories will apply whether a particular cost is treated as a direct or overhead cost. The list below is not inclusive of all allowable or unallowable expenses. Please contact [SCC financial staff](#) for questions about eligibility of expenses not listed below.

If a cost is applicable to more than one grant program or contract, the costs may be divided among each grant or contract. Charges-Reimbursements are not to exceed the full cost of the item.

Accounting: Includes the cost of establishing and maintaining accounting and other information systems required for the management of projects.

Advertising: Newspapers, magazines, radio and television programs, direct mail, trade paper, when the purpose of the advertisement is:

- To recruit personnel needed.
- Notification of elections and appointment procedures.
- To solicit bids for procuring project-related goods and services.
- To dispose of scrap or surplus materials acquired.
- To advise the public about a project activity.
- For other purposes specifically provided for in the contract.

Audit service*, including the costs of audits necessary to administer and manage the grant or contract; this includes accountability, financial, federal, and performance audits performed by the Office of State Auditor.

Budgeting, including identifiable costs related to developing, preparing, presenting, and executing the project budget.

Central stores, including maintaining and operating a central stores organization for supplies, equipment, and materials used directly or indirectly for the project.

Communications, including incurred for telephone, cell phone calls or service, facsimile service, messenger service, website, hosting, data archiving, e-mail and similar expenses.

Compensation for subcontracted personnel services, including wages, salaries, and supplementary compensation and benefits — paid currently or accrued — for services rendered under the contract, including compensation for employees of the conservation district. Such compensation is allowable if:

- It is preapproved and included in the grant addendum or contract.
- Copy of contract for services is submitted to SCC.
- It is reasonable for the services rendered, and consistent with compensation paid for similar work in the conservation district's labor market.
- It complies with applicable local, state or federal laws or rules governing procurement or merit system requirements.
- It is not compensated by any other governmental entity, conservation district, or subcontractor.

Conference and meeting costs: Examples include meeting room rentals, registration fees, supplies, contracts with facilitators, when the primary purpose of the meeting is the dissemination of technical information relating to the scope of work of the grant or contract and the individual costs are in themselves allowable. Conferences and meetings cannot be reimbursed until after it has taken place. Once it has occurred, the district may submit the expense on the next monthly voucher and is exempt from the monthly vouchering requirement.

Contracted payroll preparation: Costs of preparing payrolls and maintaining necessary related wage records. Full or part-time staffs, which are paid a wage and benefits, do not fall within this category.

Credit card processing fees: are the costs businesses pay to accept card payments. They typically range from 1.5% to 3.5% of the transaction amount, if those are passed on to the CD they are eligible for reimbursement.

Cultural resources costs: Costs associated with cultural resource reviews and surveys. Cultural resources are defined as archeological and historical sites and artifacts, and traditional areas or items of religious, ceremonial, and social uses to affected tribes. View [SCC's cultural resource policies](#) on the website for full guidance.

Disbursing services: Costs of disbursing project funds by the treasurer or other designated officer. Disbursing services cover the processing of checks or warrants, from preparation to redemption, including all records required for accountability and reconciliation.

Dues*: Including, but not limited to, National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), Washington Association of Conservation District (WACD), and Area Association dues.

Elections*: Expenses related to the elections and appointment of conservation district board supervisors, plus training of conservation district elections officer.

Equipment rental: Provided that the total cost during the project does not exceed the fair market value of the equipment and the costs are consistent with rental rates in the conservation district or contracting entity's market. The conservation district or entity must show proof of receipt from the vendor to seek reimbursement from SCC.

If district owned equipment is to be used on private land, the conservation district or entity must show proof of reimbursement by the participant to the conservation district before seeking reimbursement from SCC.

Fuel consumed*: Must generate power, provide heat or operate conservation district equipment on district property. Fuel is also an allowable expense for district owned equipment used to implement the awarded scope of work. UTV/ATV fuel use is reimbursable when used on a SCC funded project as no mileage rate is available through GSA for these types of vehicles.

Insurance*: This includes fire, casualty, theft, liability, and bonding. Auto insurance is not allowed—this is covered in the mileage reimbursement rate set by the Office of Financial Management.

Leases*: Leasing or rental costs for facilities or equipment, such as buildings or copy machines that are shared among all program activities.

Light Refreshments: Coffee and/or any non-alcoholic beverages (e.g., tea, soft drinks, juice or milk) and between meal snacks (e.g., doughnuts, sweet rolls, nuts, or fruit and cheese) at meetings, conferences, or project tours. Reimbursements for light refreshments must include a receipt for

goods, a list of attendees, [pre authorization form](#), and a copy of the meeting/event agenda. Without this documentation, reimbursement will not be provided. To meet the requirements for light refreshments, documentation must show how they are an integral part of the meeting. The district must have a policy in place to allow light refreshments. Pizza, sandwiches, etc., are not considered light refreshments. For complete information regarding light refreshments please visit the [SAAM Manual](#).

Light refreshments are not allowable under the following grant programs:

- CREP
- Shellfish
- Natural Resource Investments
- Irrigation Efficiencies
- Task Orders
- Riparian Plant Propagation

Maintenance and repair*: Costs incurred for normal preventive maintenance, necessary repair, and upkeep of property as required, maintaining an efficient operating condition, but not costs for work which add to the permanent value of the property or appreciably extend its designed life. This is not the same as normal operating costs, which include all costs for the day-to-day operation of a facility. Expenses in excess of \$1,000 must be preapproved in writing by SCC financial staff or program manager.

~~**NRCS Background Checks*:** These costs are reimbursable when paying for board members and staff.~~

Office and operating supplies: Office stationery/supplies, forms, cleaning supplies also includes small tools and minor equipment – calculators, fax machines, telephones, etc.

Personnel administration: Includes the cost of recruiting, examining, certifying, classifying, training, establishing pay standards, and performing other project related activities.

Postage: Includes postage costs for distribution of materials related to operations.

Printing and reproduction: Includes project-related materials such as forms, reports, manuals, and informational literature.

Procurement service: Soliciting bids, preparing, awarding contracts, and all contract administration to provide goods, facilities and services for projects.

Reference material: When related to the project and needed by staff.

Rental of office space*: In privately or publicly owned buildings, provided that the costs do not exceed the rental costs of similar facilities in the same locality.

Subscriptions: Accounting programs or other software used across all projects and programs.

Taxes*: Personal, property or sales tax levied by county or state governments are allowable for reimbursement.

Training and education: The cost of training directly benefitting the project, e.g. WADE training, technical training, etc. Employee training expenses related to the position includes, registration fees, mileage, meal per diem, and lodging. Trainings cannot be reimbursed until after they have been attended and completed. Once it has, the district may submit the expense on the next monthly voucher and is exempt from the monthly vouchering requirement. Please note that tuition is not an allowable expense.

- The Implementation grant is most flexible with respect to training and conference attendance/participation is generally eligible. Pre-approval is not required for implementation grant expenditures for training or conference attendance.
- All out-of-state or out-of-country travel for training/conference attendance must be pre-approved.
- For all other programs, trainings must be tied to or related to implementing the specific grant or program. Where capacity or technical expertise needs to be built up or improved may be prioritized.
- Conferences
 - Speaking or presenting at the conference with information about projects/programs the CD has implemented or is planning to implement under the SCC grant or program are eligible if pre-approved by the program manager or included in project budget approved by program manager.
 - Attending a conference as a training or professional development opportunity may require additional justification as to the benefits to implementing the SCC grant or program in question.
 - SCC may consider allowing partial reimbursement of cost if the conference is not entirely applicable to the program/project. SCC may consider a prorated reimbursement relative to the portion of conference is directly related plus travel cost.

Transportation: Includes costs for freight, cartage, express, postage and other transportation costs relating to goods purchased, delivered, or moved from one location to another. These costs must directly benefit the grant or contract.

Utilities*: Such as Electricity, telephone, internet, sewer, water, gas, and propane.

**Allowable expenses for conservation districts only.*

Conditionally eligible reimbursable ~~expenses~~ expenditures

The following costs are allowable under certain conditions. Some costs are allowable only if the activity is included in the grant or contract scope of work and budget, allowable in accordance with grant-specific programmatic guidelines, or with specific prior written approval from SCC. In such cases, submit a written request for approval to SCC. Written approval must be issued prior to incurring the obligation.

Construction costs not otherwise allowable, outside of a DIP or Cost Share Project, are eligible only if all the following criteria is met:

- The construction is part of a pilot or demonstration project or specified in a budget award or proviso.
- Public benefit outweighs individual gain.
- The construction project was pre-approved and included in the grant application Scope of Work and Budget.

Construction permits: Prior to commencement of any construction, the conservation district or entity will secure the necessary approvals and permits required by local, state or federal authorities having jurisdiction over the project, provide assurance to SCC that all approvals and permits have been secured (including cultural resources review if applicable), and keep all documentation in the district grant file or contract file.

Equipment purchase is a conditionally allowable expense and must be included in the Scope of Work or have prior written authorization from SCC financial staff or program manager for all equipment purchases totaling over \$2,000, for a single piece of equipment. If the equipment purchase is specifically approved in the grant application, additional approval is not required. All equipment purchases must fit into the scope of work of the grant or contract and have a direct correlation to completing the deliverables of the grant or contract.

Foreign transaction fees are conditionally allowable with documentation.

Sponsorships* Sponsorships are conditionally allowable if they have a specific direct purpose for the project. If determined by SCC fiscal staff or the program manager to be allowable, the expense must be included in the approved project budget. Capital funded grants do not allow sponsorships unless an additional funding source is added to the grant.

Vehicle purchases* are not considered equipment and require prior approval by SCC financial staff or program manager before incurring costs. If the vehicle purchase is specifically approved in the grant application, additional approval is not required.

Landowner recognition awards* for exemplary grant-program-specific performance in the form of certificates, plaques, etc., and of a small monetary value (\$25 or less) may be made under certain grant programs. This requires an adopted appropriate policy regarding landowner recognition awards that provides sufficient standards to establish that any awards actually made are “earned” by the landowner.

At a minimum, those standards must~~should~~ include all of the following:

- A description of the basis on which the conservation district will make landowner recognition awards.
- A description of the process by which the conservation district will decide who is to receive such awards.
- A description of the type of award to which a landowner will be entitled.

The award activity is included in the Scope of Work.

Clothing/apparel is reimbursable for purchase of apparel necessary for employees' safety, or for public health and safety while performing job duties under a grant Scope of Work (e.g., hard hats, protective eyewear, protective gloves, boots, and other conservation district logo clothing to identify staff while representing the district). The district must have a policy on clothing purchases. District logo clothing cannot be reimbursed when using for promotion purposes. This is a conditionally allowable expenditure on operating grants only.

Tabs or registration fees for UTVs or ATVs may be vouchered for under the Implementation grant as there is no specific mileage reimbursement rate for these types of vehicles.

**Allowable expenses for conservation districts only.*

Direct costs

SCC will reimburse for direct and overhead costs that are allowable under the grant or contract.

What are direct costs?

Those that can be assigned to a particular project activity and budget object contained in the grant or contract, such as:

- Compensation of actual hours of employees for the time devoted to the project.
- Listed in Allowable Reimbursable Expenses.
- Cost of materials and equipment used specifically for the project.
- Costs of services furnished for the project by a conservation district or entity.
- Actual hours of administrative personnel who process vouchers, payroll, and other accounting activities specific to this project.

Overhead

All costs incurred for a common purpose and not readily identifiable with a particular project activity. This includes costs incurred by others who supply goods, services, or facilities such as:

- Costs of utilities for a facility shared by a project and other conservation district or entity activities.
- Costs of supervisory personnel who oversee project activities as well as other conservation district or entity activities.
- Overhead rate allowed for a contract will be specified in the terms of the contract.

Computing Conservation District Overhead Costs

Each biennium, SCC will set the maximum rate that can be taken for overhead costs. The overhead will be a percentage of each voucher's direct costs for salaries and benefits. Conservation districts establish their rate per grant program on the addendum once it has been approved by the board of supervisors. However, specific programmatic guidelines may limit choices for computing overhead costs. Once an overhead percentage is selected and vouchered against, it remains in effect for the period identified on the appropriate addendum and cannot be changed. Supporting documentation for overhead costs must be available for inspection.

In nearly all programs, SCC provides conservation districts the ability to bill overhead to cover implementation costs. The overhead is for the conservation district to use to pay any expenses not covered through reimbursable expenses.

Employee Hours X Employee Rate \$ (Composite Rate) = \$Total Pay X Overhead
Rate = allowed overhead for conservation district

Example:

10 hours (Employee Hours) X \$25.00 (Composite Rate) = \$250.00 (Total Pay)
\$250.00 (Total Pay) X 25% (District Established Overhead Rate) = \$62.50 (allowed overhead for conservation district).

Computing Contract Overhead Costs

Overhead rate allowed for the contract will be specified in the terms of the contract. Once an overhead percentage is selected and vouchered against, it remains in effect for the period identified in the terms of the contract and cannot be changed during the grant period. Supporting documentation for overhead costs must be available for inspection.

Employee Hours X Employee Rate \$ (Composite Rate) = \$Total Pay X Overhead
Rate = allowed overhead for contract

Example:

10 hours (Employee Hours) X \$25.00 (Composite Rate) = \$250.00 (Total Pay)
\$250.00 (Total Pay) X 25% (Contract Established Overhead Rate) = \$62.50 (allowed overhead for contract).

Employee Composite Rate

A composite rate is the accepted method to recoup employee salary, and employer paid benefits. SCC provides a form to be used by conservation districts and VSP counties to establish hourly billing rates and is completed for each employee. Loaded composite rates and/or fees added onto a composite rate will not be accepted.

A composite rate includes the employer's share of social security or SEP, Medicare, health insurance premiums, employment security, labor and industries, retirement, leave-sick, military or vacation hours, and any other employer-paid benefits.

New Composite Rate Forms are required for each employee when any of the following occur:

- ~~Each January, a new form is required based on the districts updated yearly Labor and Industry and Employment Security Department rates.~~
- A change in the employee's salary or hourly wage.
- A change in the employee's benefits paid by employer (retirement, health, other).
- A change in leave accrual amounts (annual, sick, holidays).

Handling Reimbursement for Employer-Paid Benefits

When using a composite rate, the employer is reimbursed for the expenses related to taxes, leave, and benefits. It's the employer's responsibility to ensure these funds are used for the purposes for which the reimbursement was made. The type of benefit reimbursed has procedures that dictate the appropriate action.

- Social Security, Medicare taxes, retirement contributions, and health care premiums, must be submitted to the appropriate entity within the defined timeline.
- Employment security and labor and industry premiums are generally due every quarter.
- Leave and holiday hours are to be recorded as an employer's liability on all monthly financial reports provided to the board.
- The completed composite rate includes a reimbursement of each leave and holiday hours provided.
- These funds ~~should be~~should be set aside in a separate account. The districts is required to track accrued leave liabilities and manage reimbursement of funds for employer paid benefits against those liabilities
- Use the funds in the separate account to cover the costs of the employee's leave time when their time cannot be charged to a contract.
- Legal risks for the employer exist if contributions and taxes are not made on behalf of the employee.
- Legal risks exist for the employers when leave and holiday hours must be reimbursed, and the cash does not exist to pay the employee for any leave.

Section 5: ~~Special~~SCC Grant Programs

In this section, you'll learn about: Please note: once programmatic guidelines are approved, we will include the updated links here.

SCC offers grant programs funded through both Operating and Capital funding. Each program is subject to specific proviso language and program guidelines. The eligible expenditures vary based on the funding type and the guidelines for each grant. For more details, please refer to the table of common expenditures here.

✓ ~~Professional Engineering Grant Program~~Operating Grant Programs

- Disaster Assistance Program
- Implementation
- Forest Heath and Community Wildlife Resiliency
- Professional Engineering
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- Sustainable Farms and Fields
- ✚○ Task Orders and Work Orders
- ✚~~Memorandum of agreement~~
- ✚~~Moving the host area~~

✚~~CREP Grant Program~~

- ✚~~Cost share~~
- ✚~~Maintenance~~
- ✚~~Mid contract management~~
- ✚~~FSA Practice Incentive Payments (PIP)~~

✓ Capital Grant Programs

- ✚ CREP
- ✚ Shellfish Irrigation Efficiencies
- ✓ Natural Resource Investments
- ✓ Shellfish
 - ✚ Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative
 - ✚ Livestock
- ✓ **Other Grant Programs**

Disaster Assistance Program

In 2022, the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) established the Disaster Assistance Program (DAP). The DAP is a short-term disaster recovery financial assistance program for farmers and ranchers sustaining physical damage or incurring expenses due to a natural disaster. The DAP is set out in the SCC's statute in RCW 99.08.645.

The DAP uses SCC operating funds to partially reimburse eligible disaster recovery expenses or fund the implementation of best management practices that restore and/or increase disaster resiliency.

[View complete Disaster Assistance Program guidelines here.](#)

Professional Engineering Grant Program

SCC provides grant funding to support professional engineering services oversight, technical assistance, and staff training for coordinating groups of conservation districts. These conservation districts may hire an “area professional engineer” or contract services to accomplish engineering work prioritized by each respective area. Each area consists of several conservation districts that partner to pool financial resources to support an engineering program. Each district participating in the region contribute to an Engineering Committee to provide a prioritized list of projects for each of the partnering districts. The engineering program workload and priorities are set according to each region’s inter-district agreement. One district within each area acts as the designated grant administrator. These areas develop interdistrict agreements designed to govern access to and prioritize engineering services among the participating districts.

~~SCC provides grant funding to partially support professional engineering services oversight, technical assistance, and staff training for coordinating groups of conservation districts. These conservation districts hire an “area professional engineer” and otherwise accomplish engineering work prioritized by each respective area.~~

~~Each area consists of several conservation districts that partner to pool financial resources to support an engineering program. Each district participating in the region contribute to an Engineering Committee to provide a prioritized list of projects for each of the partnering districts. The engineering program workload and priorities are set according to each region’s inter-district agreement.~~

~~One district within each area acts as the designated grant administrator. These areas develop inter-district agreements designed to govern access to and prioritize engineering services among the participating districts.~~

“Programmatic Procedures” Specific to Professional Engineering Grants:

~~The Professional Engineering Grant Program exists to meet the original intent of providing engineering services to private landowners through conservation districts and providing technical oversight to district technicians.~~

~~The most efficient and effective way to meet that legislative intent is for districts to partner together and hire a licensed professional engineer that supports multiple districts in a region.~~

~~Conservation districts will have the opportunity prior to each grant award period to reconfigure the regional area participants. Districts without an engineer may contract out for engineering services.~~

Inter-Local Agreement (ILA)

~~Each designated area shall utilize an “Inter-Local Agreement” or ILA which must be signed by all participating conservation districts. The procedure for an area to amend the agreement is to be~~

~~included in the agreement. A copy of this agreement will be provided to each participating conservation district. This agreement will spell out how the Area Engineering Committee will function, including the meeting schedule and how the distribution of the workload of the engineer will be established.~~

~~Before any costs can be incurred, the host district must submit the ILA with all district signatures to SCC. The original document will stay with the district and a copy will be kept in SCC master contract file. The ILA does need to be reviewed, signed by all parties, approved by the Area Engineering Committee, and submitted to SCC at the start of each biennium.~~

Funding uses

~~Professional Engineering Grant funding may be used for salary and benefits, overhead, goods and services, travel and training. Any equipment purchases will be approved on a case by case basis if funding is available and the purchase is fully supported by the Area Engineering Committee. It is the intent of this program to use accumulated overhead to fund most equipment purchases.~~

Moving the Host Engineering Area

Equipment

~~In the event the engineering program changes its host district, all equipment purchased with SCC funds, including overhead, will transfer to the new hosting district. An inventory of such equipment shall be maintained and shared with the Area Engineering Committee annually.~~

~~In the event the engineering program changes host districts within the region, all unexpended funds must transfer to the new host district to benefit the program.~~

Annual and Sick Leave

~~If an engineer moves from one district to another in the area, the unused, accrued annual leave and sick leave is to move with them. If the person exits employment and the host district changes, then all leave would be handled based on the current district policy.~~

~~Full [View the complete](#) Professional Engineering program guidelines [can be found here](#) on SCC's website.~~

Implementation Grant – Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

Under SCC's authority in RCW 89.08, Implementation grants are allocations of funding to conservation districts of Conservation Technical Assistance and general fund operating funds appropriated to the SCC. These funds are allocated equally between the conservation districts on a fiscal year basis. The amount of the annual Implementation grant is determined by appropriation levels and is approved annually by SCC Commissioners in May. Conservation districts apply for these funds by submitting a grant addendum form each July. All Implementation grant funds must be utilized within the fiscal year and all expenses must be included on the final June voucher each year.

Implementation grant funds support the basic operating expenses of conservation districts and are utilized for expenses such as but not limited to: office space rent/lease, utilities, administration,

accounting, IT, equipment and vehicles, staff salaries and benefits, audits, elections, long range and annual planning, community engagement, informing the public of district activities and opportunities, grant writing, and training. All of these expenses are necessary to enable the conservation districts to function within legal parameters to fulfil their statutory mission of natural resource conservation.

For any potentially ground-disturbing activities (such as but not limited to cost-share, district implemented projects, or public works projects) funded from the Implementation Grant, it is the conservation district's responsibility to budget for potential costs of cultural resources compliance as additional funds are not held aside from this grant for that purpose.

Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resilience Program

The forest health and community wildfire resilience program supports conservation districts' work in helping cooperators improve forest and rangeland health on their lands and assisting communities in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from wildfire. This program is implemented in close collaboration with state and local forestry and wildfire entities and aligns with current national and state-level wildfire and forest health strategies.

[View complete Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resilience guidelines here.](#)

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Before incurring any costs for CREP Cost Share or Maintenance you must first submit a CREP Cost Share and Maintenance Authorization Request to the CREP Coordinator for prior approval. Once approved, the funds will be amended into the grant and expenses may be incurred. No expenses will be reimbursed prior to approval by the CREP Coordinator. Full CREP program guidance can be found on SCC's website.

Cost Share

SCC will reimburse 10 percent of all CREP cost share. When vouchering, the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) form 848B must be included to show completion of practice and total practice cost. All receipts for the implementation of the practice must also be included.

Maintenance

SCC will reimburse 100 percent of all maintenance costs. Include all receipts when vouchering.

Mid-Contract Management

SCC will reimburse 50 percent of the cost share funds that FSA pays for Mid-Contract Management.

~~Advance Payments to Landowners Based on FSA Practice Incentive Payments (PIP)~~

~~As an option for participating landowners, SCC has agreed to make available advanced loan payments from state CREP cost share funds based on the PIP payment calculated by FSA (40 percent of allowable costs). Contact SCC's financial staff for current program information. PIP funds are subject to availability.~~

Regional Conservation Partnership Program Match

The SCC is the designated agency to pass through state capital legislative appropriations to conservation districts implementing a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) award from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS administers this Farm Bill program through a regular annual solicitation cycle. Conservation districts may request state matching funds for an RCPP from the SCC, but funding availability is dependent on legislative appropriations. Appropriations received by the SCC are allocated to conservation districts based on identified funding needs of awarded RCPPs for the current biennium.

RCPP match funds may be utilized for the following eligible expenses: cost share, district implemented projects, staff time and overhead, travel, training specifically related to or tied to implementing the RCPP, education and outreach activities, and equipment specifically related to or required to implement the RCPP. All training and equipment expenses must be pre-approved by the Program Manager and Finance staff to be eligible for reimbursement.

Sustainable Farms and Fields

The Sustainable Farms and Fields (SFF) grant program was established to increase the implementation of climate-smart practices to increase carbon sequestration and reduce carbon dioxide equivalent (greenhouse gases, GHG) emissions on farmland, rangeland, and tidelands in Washington through voluntary incentives.

[View complete Sustainable Farms and Fields guidelines here.](#)

Task Orders and Work Orders

Task Orders are grants to CDs that are made possible by the funding support of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) under a contribution agreement with the SCC. Typically, NRCS provides a portion of the funding, and the SCC provides the remainder. Task Orders are developed locally between NRCS and CD staff around specific deliverables utilizing a task order template form to organize the information. Factors considered during the local development process include but are not limited to, CD expertise, capacity, and timing of deliverables' completion. Once developed locally, a Task Order is then channeled through review steps at both NRCS and SCC before a grant is awarded to a CD to complete the deliverables. Vouchering for Task Orders only occurs when one or more deliverables has been completed. All work under a Task Order must be

completed within the fiscal year and all completed work vouchered for no later than the June voucher each year. Each task order has an effective date and end date unique to the individual task order. Reporting requirements may vary for each task order dependent on the identified deliverables. A billing report form is required to accompany each voucher submitted.

Work Orders (WO) are grants to CDs that are made possible by the funding support of the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) (or another state agency) under an agreement or contract with the SCC. Each WO identifies specific deliverables and funding levels associated with those deliverables. Each WO has an effective date and end date unique to the individual work order. Vouchering may occur on a monthly basis if the WO deliverables align with SCC project types (such as a District Implemented Project) or once a deliverable is complete for other types of activities (such as a workshop or hosting a training). Reporting requirements will vary for each WO dependent on the identified deliverables.

Capital Grant Programs

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

Capital projects are usually funded by sources specifically set aside for capital purposes, such as proceeds of bond sales, long-term financing contracts, and other dedicated revenues.¹ Projects are typically on-the-ground projects and technical assistance activities limited to those that support projects or will lead to capital funded projects.

CREP

The funding is provided solely to help cooperators participate in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) offered by the USDA's Farm Services Agency (FSA) in accordance with the FSA/State agreement for CREP. CREP in Washington is intended to alleviate some of agriculture-related impacts on water quality and salmon habitat. FSA is the program lead. The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) provides cost share, maintenance, practice incentive payment loans and technical assistance.

View the complete guidelines that cover cost share, maintenance, and Technical Assistance (TA) here.

Irrigation Efficiencies

The Irrigation Efficiencies Grants Program is a water savings program. It targets agricultural irrigation water as its primary source of water savings through investments in more efficient application and conveyance infrastructure and associated technical assistance.

The program has three types of funding:

¹ [Office of Financial Management Budget Division 2015-25 Capital Budget Instructions June 2014, OFM Directive 14B-02.](#)

- General Technical Assistance (TA1) is funding for conservation districts to administer their Irrigation Efficiencies Program. Typically, a CD would apply for these funds at the beginning of each fiscal year to cover program expenses during that year. However, a CD can apply for this type of funding as needed at anytime during the biennium.
- Project Specific TA (TA2) is funding for CDs to develop, design the implementation of a project. These costs could include: cultural resources, engineering, and irrigation water management planning.
- Financial Assistance (FA) is funding for cost share or DIP reimburse for the installation of the infrastructure best management practices within an agreement.

[View the complete Irrigation Efficiencies guidelines here.](#)

Natural Resource Investments

Natural Resource Investments (NRI) enables districts help local land users or land managers pay for and construct conservation projects that address the most pressing state and local priorities. NRI funding is used for the implementation of locally prioritized projects. It is flexible SCC project funding as it can be used to implement capital projects addressing many different natural resources concerns on a wide range of land uses and ownership utilizing a wide variety of best management practices. NRI funding is available statewide and an equal amount of initial funding is made available to each district. Projects must be completed within the biennium that they are awarded.

[View complete Natural Resource Investments guidelines here.](#)

Shellfish

The Shellfish grant program funds projects to conservation districts to implement best management practices (BMPs) that protect or improve the quality of water draining into shellfish growing areas by reducing agricultural non-point pollution, such as fecal coliform and nutrient runoff.

Program Rules:

- ~~Cost share awards are allocated per BMP, based on the amount requested in the Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS).~~
- ~~Based on the cost share award, a technical assistance percentage (determined by SCC on a biennial basis) will be awarded to include the costs of technical assistance, engineering, travel, and overhead. If applicable, districts may utilize their technical assistance allocation to pay for permits.~~
- ~~Cultural resource costs are awarded on a case-by-case basis in addition to grant funding.~~
- ~~Ineligible costs:~~
 - ~~Administrative goods and services under the technical assistance award. Goods and services relating to cost share or district implemented projects are eligible for reimbursement.~~
 - ~~Education and outreach.~~

- ~~Significant movement on the project must begin within 120 days of the funding allocation.~~
- ~~This program requires a set of shellfish program related questions that must be answered in the CPDS to be considered for funding.~~

View complete [Shellfish Programmatic Guidelines](#).

Natural Resource Investments

Program Rules:

- ~~Grant awards are allocated based upon review and acceptance of the district's submitted grant addendum and CPDS entries.~~
- ~~Based on the total grant award, a technical assistance percentage (determined by SCC on a biennial basis) will be awarded to include the costs of technical assistance, engineering, travel, and overhead. If applicable, districts may utilize their technical assistance allocation to pay for permits.~~
- ~~Cultural resource costs are awarded on a case-by-case basis in addition to grant funding.~~
- ~~Ineligible costs:~~
 - ~~Administrative goods and services under the technical assistance award. Goods and services relating to cost share or district implemented projects are eligible for reimbursement.~~
 - ~~Education and outreach.~~
- ~~Significant movement on the project must begin within 120 days of the funding allocation.~~

View complete [Natural Resource Investments Programmatic Guidelines](#).

Livestock

This program provides funding for district staff to provide technical assistance to livestock facilities.

Eligible costs:

- Salaries and benefits
- Travel
- Overhead

Conditional costs:

- Goods and services
- Postage for soil tests
- Education and outreach

View complete [Livestock TA Programmatic Guidelines](#).

Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative

The Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI) is a strong collaboration between the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the Department of Natural Resources, and SCC. WSSRI emerged from a legislative proviso initially funded in the 21-23 biennium budget. Ongoing operating funds allocated to WDFW support habitat restoration in the shrubsteppe as well as fire recovery practices. Capital funding is typically designated for wildlife friendly fencing practices, including virtual fencing. Depending on funding available, there may be opportunities for habitat restoration projects as well.

- Deferred Grazing

The Deferred Grazing Reimbursement program provides reimbursement for emergency hay feed and pasture rental to rest burned native shrubsteppe pastures. Deferred Grazing programs will be implemented dependent on the needs that arise each wildland fire season, as determined by the WSRRI steering committee.

- Wildlife Friendly Fencing

Wildlife Friendly Fencing is a cost-share program that provides funding to implement new hard wire fencing that is designed to WSRRI wildlife friendly specifications, such as smooth wire and lower height. Additionally, WSRRI funds the retrofitting of existing barbed wire fencing to wildlife friendly standards and full removal of fence from the landscape. Virtual fencing is eligible for WSRRI funding, a newer technology that utilizes signal receiving collars and base stations and/or cell coverage to establish virtual fence lines that can be manipulated with software.

Other Grant Programs

There may be instances where SCC receives funding to implement special grant programs. These grants will have specific programmatic guidelines and reporting requirements which will be provided upon funding. More information on special grant programs that may be available can be found [under Program Guidelines](#).

Section 6: Getting Paid

In this section, you'll learn about:

- ✓ Reimbursement basics
- ✓ Standards
- ✓ Authorized signature forms
- ✓ ~~No activity~~
- ✓ Payment requests

Reimbursement Basics

SCC will only reimburse costs that have already been paid by the district or entity. Districts or entities may only submit a grant or contract reimbursement request after all payments have been made to employees, ~~landowner~~cooperator, subcontractors, participants, and vendors.

SCC requires that all conservation districts and entities to be registered with the statewide vendor unit and sign up for direct deposit. All payments will be made via electronic funds transfer (EFT).

Standards

Funds must be expended and accounted for in accordance with state laws, the State Auditor's Office Budget, Accounting and Reporting System Manual (BARS), the SAAM manual, policies, and procedures.

Accounting procedures must:

- Provide accurate and complete disclosure of the financial results of projects in accordance with all financial reporting procedures of the grant or contract.
- Identify the source and application of project funds. Records must contain copies of all contracts, authorizations, obligations, assets, liabilities, expenditures, and income.
- Provide effective internal control and accountability for all project cash, real and personal property, and other assets. All property must be safeguarded and assure that it is used solely for authorized purposes.
- Conform to the project budget. Actual expenditures must be in accordance with line items in the grant or contract budget.
- Conform to applicable cost principles detailed in all terms of the grant or contract.
- Maintain appropriate supporting source documentation. This includes record of check numbers, invoices, purchase receipts, payrolls, time and attendance records, contract award documents, and vouchers sent to SCC.

Standards for accounting records include the following or their equivalent:

- **A general ledger:** Classifies, records, and summarizes all accounting transactions relevant to the project.
- **A cash receipts ledger:** Records all funds (cash, checks, money orders) received by the conservation district or entity.
- **A cash disbursements ledger or check register:** Records all expenditures made by the conservation district, including date, warrant or voucher number, payee, and purpose of the payment.

It is also important to maintain books, records, documents, and other evidence of accounting procedures and project policies and practices that are sufficient to permit the preparation of reports required by the state of Washington and to permit the tracking of funds to a level of expenditure adequate to ensure that the funds have been spent in accordance with federal and state laws, regulations, policies, procedures, and the grant or contract.

These records will be subject at all reasonable hours to inspection, review or audit by SCC or designated state officials and the State Auditor.

District Authorized Signatures Form

A current, district and/or county [Authorized Signatures Form](#) must be on file at SCC office before vouchers can be processed or paid. This form requires a wet signature.

A new form is required at the beginning of each biennium and a new form must be submitted after a district election is certified or any other changes to persons authorized to obligate the district (e.g., new staff, new supervisors, changes in officers).

The original fully signed form must be retained at the district office. A copy ~~shall~~must be submitted to SCC at sccgrants@scc.wa.gov before any grant or contract payments will be reimbursed.

To make a temporary change to the Authorized Signature Form, a district may submit a memo outlining the change in delegation authority. For example, in the event of a signer's extended absence.

A district may also attach an additional page to the Authorized Signature form further breaking out employees approved to sign certain grant forms as opposed to an entire category as shown on the form.

Composite Rate Forms

Composite Rate Forms are required for each employee who will have time billed to a contract or grant. View the [District Composite Rate Form](#) or the [Contract Composite Rate Form](#).

A new form is necessary under all the following:

~~• January of each year.~~

- The employee's salary or hourly wage changes.
- An Employment Security Department or Labor and Industry rate changes.
- Leave accrual amounts for employees change.
- Employer paid benefit rate changes including retirement and health insurance.

Sick, annual, and holiday leave is incorporated into the composite rate and will not be charged separately.

SCC will not accept loaded composite rates and/or service fees added onto an existing composite rate. A loaded composite rate is an employee composite rate that adds to, or artificially inflates, actual or reasonably estimated costs or charges above and beyond the actual costs paid out to, or on behalf of, the employee for hours worked.

Acceptable components of an employee's composite rate are salary or wages, payroll taxes, unemployment insurance, employee benefits such as medical insurance, earned sick or vacation leave accrual, military leave, Social Security & Medicare withholding, and retirement benefits. Other costs such as equipment, supplies, training, or inflating the employee's salary or wages, are not acceptable on a composite rate for SCC funding sources.

~~A monthly voucher is required by the 20th of each month, even if expenditures have not been incurred. Choosing and submitting a "No Activity" voucher is certifying no expenses have been incurred for that period. Certain grant programs such as TSP do not require no activity vouchers to be submitted.~~

~~Once a "No Activity" voucher has been submitted for a month, subsequently submitting a voucher request for that period is not allowed. SCC would not approve payment, for example, if a district submits a "No Activity" voucher for three months and then submits a voucher with expenditures incurred during these same months. Costs incurred during a period for which a "no activity" voucher was submitted are not allowable.~~

~~If expenditures have not been incurred, and "No Activity" vouchers have been submitted for more than four months, a letter to SCC addressing why the funds have not been utilized during the period, may be required. See the Conservation District Master Contract for work commencement requirements.~~

~~An example of a "No Activity" voucher can be seen [here](#).~~

Voucher Payment Requests

Voucher payment request are submitted electronically to sccgrants@scc.wa.gov with the required attachments. Vouchers will only be processed when all required forms and supporting documents have been received. All SCC [grant forms](#) and [contracting forms](#) can be found on our website under the corresponding tab. Please refer to Section 3 for full vouchering requirement.

- ~~SCC requires vouchering for reimbursement each calendar month. All vouchers for reimbursement must be submitted by the 20th of the month following the month when expenses were incurred by the conservation district or entity. For example, expenses incurred January 1-31 must be vouchered for reimbursement no later than February 20. Exceptions will be approved on a case-by-case basis by fiscal staff. Final vouchers are required by July 10th of each year to abide by the deadline established by the Office of Financial Management.~~
- ~~For example, SCC cannot pay charges such as salaries, mileage and/or goods and services incurred July 1-31 on a September voucher. Those charges would need to be included on the July voucher due to SCC no later than August 20.~~
- ~~No expenses can be reimbursed from a prior fiscal year. All expenses must be paid for and received in the fiscal year they were incurred regardless of funding source.~~
 - ~~This does not apply to cost share reimbursements or district implemented projects. These costs may be vouchered for when BMP(s) are completed in accordance with the grant funding requirements. All cost share funding and district implemented projects must be vouchered for and completed by the end of the fiscal year if funded through operating funds or the end of the biennium if funded through capital funding.~~
- ~~All original signed vouchers and backup documentation is to be maintained at the conservation district or entity.~~
- ~~When a conservation district or entity is providing services to another conservation district or entity, additional fees or loaded compensation rates above and beyond the composite rates are not allowable for reimbursement.~~

Standards for payment

- Unless an [Advance Payment Agreement](#) or Basic Allocation Payment is requested, all funds will be disbursed as reimbursement for costs already paid. Please refer to [Section 7](#) of this manual for further information on the above-mentioned payments.
- Approved allowable costs or obligations incurred must have been paid and received by the conservation district or entity at the time the conservation district or entity seeks reimbursement from SCC.

Documents Required with Reimbursement Requests

- The following supporting documentation is required for all grant or contract reimbursement requests:
- [Voucher Support Summary Page](#)—by Intermediate Outcome.
- [Voucher Support Detail Page](#)—by Intermediate Outcome.
- Contract reimbursement requests require a contract specific A-19.
- Employee time sheets, signed and dated by an authorized signatory or direct supervisor as well as the employee, must be submitted with each voucher.
- Travel Expense Vouchers and receipts must be submitted each time [and employee](#) travel reimbursement is requested and signed and dated by authorized signatory.
 - [Lodging costs and per diem meals must be itemized on a travel voucher for each employee.](#) Departure and return trip times are required on the travel voucher for the

dates of travel to determine if per diem meal costs are eligible for reimbursement per OFM's travel policies (e.g., 11-hour rule). Employees must purchase their per diem meals and claim reimbursement at the per diem rate through the A-20 Travel Expense Voucher or similar form containing all the required information. Lodging purchased with the district credit card does not need to be itemized on a A-20.

- Subcontracts or Interlocal Agreements must be included when vouchering for reimbursement for the first time. We will keep a copy in our grant file.
- Copies of the signed Contract for Cost Share (for completed projects) or [Cost Share Partial Payment Request](#) form (for partially completed projects) with all receipts and [The Cultural Resources Complied Statement Form](#) must be submitted each time cost share reimbursement is requested. All cost share or District Implemented pProjects funded by SCC must be entered in the [CPDS](#). The Contract for Cost Share must be generated from CPDS and is the only agreement SCC will recognize for cost share, unless specified in the specific grant programmatic guidelines. No changes in the terms and conditions of the contract will be allowed.
- The following entries are required in the CPDS when vouchering for cost share:
 - Before and after photos.
 - Planned and actual implementation measures.
 - BMP and project completion dates.
- District Implemented Project Landowner Agreement ~~with all receipts~~ and the Cultural Resources Complied Statement Form must be submitted with the first each time reimbursement is requested request. After that, monthly invoicing is required for all project costs if expenditures are incurred. All District Implemented pProjects funded by SCC must be entered in the CPDS. Once the project is completed, the DIP Closeout Form is required to be submitted with the final billing and the closeout tab in CPDS must be updated.
- Composite salary rate information must be updated and submitted when there is a change.
- All goods and services charges require a receipt for reimbursement. No payments will be issued without them.

Forms Required with Reimbursement Requests

The conservation district [Voucher Support Forms](#) supplied by SCC are to be submitted with each grant reimbursement request. The contract [Voucher Support Forms](#) supplied by SCC along with the contract specific A-19 are required to be submitted with each contract reimbursement request.

Submittal of Voucher and Documentation

Vouchers and back up documentation must be emailed in a PDF format to sccgrants@scc.wa.gov. Please do not send voucher requests to individual financial staff email inboxes. Conservation districts or entities will maintain the original signed documentation, per the BARS Manual.

For consistency and efficiency, we are requesting the voucher attachments be sent in a pdf format and named as listed below:

Grants 24-11-IM #10 (Fiscal Year, district number, grant program, voucher #)

Contracts K2014 #10 (assigned contract number, voucher #)

By naming the documents consistently this will assist Finance Staff in determining which contracts or grants are in the email. It is also helpful to mention which programs are attached to the email in the Reference line (i.e., Implementation, CREP, VSP, etc.).

Voucher Support Form – Detail Page

- The Detail Page breaks down project expenses according to the intermediate outcomes.
- Each expense is itemized on this page according to the relevant intermediate outcome.
- Each expense must be put on as its own line item.
- The detailed composite rate information by employee must be included.
- Totals from this form are transferred to the Voucher Summary Page.
- A composite rate form for each employee must be on file at SCC office.

Voucher Support Form - Summary Page

- The Summary Page collects the totals of the Intermediate Outcomes from the Detail Page.
- The Voucher Support Form is the “authorizing payment” document and must include an authorized signature and date.

Supporting Documentation of Costs

The conservation district or entity will maintain the following support documentation for each voucher reimbursement request in a separate grant or contract file. This will be kept in accordance with the [Secretary of State Records Retention Schedule](#) after the expiration date of the grant or contract:

- Composite rate forms for each employee working under that contract.
- Signed and dated copies of employee time sheets with the hours worked and the accompanying math used to reach the salary amount requested.
- State travel vouchers signed and dated by the claimant and approved by an authorized signer. If applicable, copies of lodging receipts must be attached.
- Copies of vehicle travel logs for mileage reimbursement.
- Copies of proof of expenditures for non-personnel costs incurred such as invoices, bills, receipts, or canceled checks.
- Copies of the signed the district-implemented project (DIP) Landowner Agreement, Contract for Cost Share, grant specific cost share contract as outlined in programmatic guidelines. This also includes the Cost Share Partial Payment Request form (if applicable) and copies of all receipts, and the Cost Share Detail Receipt Worksheet or other proof of expenditures related to the cost share project.

If the funding source is federal, all grant or contract files need to be kept in accordance with the federal established records retention schedule.

Submitting Supporting Documentation of Costs

- When expenditure questions and/or other concerns arise, SCC may request additional supporting documentation.
- SCC reserves the right to request additional supporting documentation during the grant or contract.

Employee Time Sheets

- Anytime a reimbursement request includes an expense for employee time, signed and dated time sheets must be submitted.
- Employee time must be recorded and broken down by intermediate outcome outlined in the scope of work for each grant or contract.
- Do not include the employee's Social Security Number or birthday on the time sheet.
- The time sheet must be signed and dated by both the employee and an Authorized Signatory or direct supervisor.
- If the manager's timesheet is submitted, it must be signed and dated by both the manager as well as an Authorized Signatory.
- Overtime **and exchange time** is to be billed only when the hours are earned. **The district must provide documentation to show the overtime or exchange time earned. If the week where overtime or exchange time is incurred is spread between two pay periods, both timesheets are required so SCC can verify the time earned. Over time is only eligible for reimbursement if staff qualify to earn over time per the fair labor standards act.**
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/overtime>
 - Overtime that appears to be excessive or unreasonable may result in additional justification or explanation being requested by SCC.

Conservation District Basic Allocation Payment

A conservation district Basic Allocation Payment may be requested at the beginning of each fiscal year before any grant payments is made. Based upon status of the Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (CAPP) Evaluation and the receipt of required paperwork, a request up to \$12,500 will be taken out of available Implementation grant funding. If a district requests Basic Allocation Payment, the last intermediate outcome of the Implementation grant will be the Basic Allocation Payment.

This will be issued as a single payment. To be allowable to receive this payment, the district must meet the CAPP threshold.

A request for this payment must be made by identifying the request on the Implementation grant addendum.

Maintaining eligibility requires continued submittal of complete, accurate, and timely expenditure and activity reports for the fiscal year. SCC may with notice require repayment of the allocation against actual expenditures if these requirements are not met.

Fiscal year end and final request for payment

- Final requests for payment, [grant](#) or [contract](#) close out form, supporting materials, supplemental reports, and signatures, must be submitted within ten (10) days after the end of the fiscal year.
- If requests for additional documents necessary to pay the final voucher have not been received after 30 days of the end of the fiscal year, the voucher will be considered late and may not be authorized for payment.
- Only expenses incurred prior to the expiration date of the contract will be allowable for reimbursement.

The last payment will be processed only after all required reports, final payment request, and closing documents have been received by SCC.

Voucher or Contract Review

Before submitting a reimbursement request, double check all charges are accurate and are being coded to the correct outcomes as detailed on the addendum or contract A-19. Once the district or entity receives the budget spreadsheet from SCC, please review it to ensure all charges were correctly coded to the correct outcomes. It is the district or entity's responsibility to identify and notify SCC of any discrepancies within 30 days of receiving payment notification.

Section 7: Conservation District Advance Payment

In this section, you'll learn about:

- ✓ Advance payment

Advance Payment

SCC recognizes conservation districts may not have the cash flow needed to reimburse participants for expenditures related to the implementation of approved projects. We have a funds advance policy that allows for short-term cash advances.

For all conservation districts requesting an advance under this policy, the following shall apply:

- Advances may not exceed 50 percent of the cost share or district implemented project allocation of SCC share of the awarded funds in the grant agreement and may be restricted to less than that amount, determined by SCC financial staff.
- Advances are only allowed on awarded project funding, not technical assistance funds.
- SCC financial staff will evaluate the financial management activity and financial standing of the conservation district in determining the maximum amount allowable.

- Advances are not automatically granted. SCC may decline any request to ensure the integrity of the program.
- SCC reserves the right to inspect the conservation district records on any advance, at any time.
- If the district or county has a compelling reason(s) to request an exception to this policy, you may submit a written request for a policy exception to your Regional Manager and SCC's Fiscal Manager.

To apply for funds

- The conservation district must send SCC a request by submitting [SCC Advance Payment Agreement](#).
- The request for an advance ~~shall~~ must be signed by the district manager or chair.
- Requests for the advance must be for allowable expenses and be fully and properly expended by the end of each fiscal year or biennium depending on the grant funding source.

Reconciling the Advance

- Advances are considered satisfied after review and approval by SCC financial staff of the voucher and appropriate documents. The voucher must reflect the full amount of the expenditures required to receive the advance. All necessary and required documentation must be provided.
- A complete voucher must be reconciled within 10 days of the end of each fiscal year or biennium. If the advance is not fully reconciled by the end of the fiscal year or biennium, the district is required to repay SCC for the unreconciled outstanding balance remaining within 30 days of the end of the biennium or fiscal year in which the grant was awarded.
- A conservation district may only have one active advance request per grant at any one time. If requesting multiple advances in a grant, each advance must be fully reconciled before another advance request will be approved.
- All voucher requests that reconcile against the advance are on a reimbursement basis only. The district must reimburse participants for the cost share costs prior to submitting the voucher to SCC for reimbursement. For District Implemented Projects (DIP), the district must have reimbursed all invoices prior to requesting reimbursement.

If SCC staff has follow-up questions or further inquiries about the advance documentation submitted by a conservation district, the conservation district shall have five business days from the date of contact by SCC to fully respond to the request for additional or clarifying information. An incomplete response to SCC request may result in a finding of noncompliance.

Noncompliance with Advance Policy

Failure to comply with the SCC advance payment policy and requirements ~~shall~~ will result in the following:

- A first noncompliance offense ~~shall~~ will result in suspension of all advances for three months for the conservation district.

- A second noncompliance offense ~~shall~~will result in suspension of all advances for six months for the conservation district.
- A third noncompliance offense ~~shall~~will result in suspension of all advances for one year or more for the conservation district.

For any noncompliance, and at the discretion of SCC Executive Director or Conservation Commissioners, future grant awards may be impacted through delay or reduction.

SCC may make a referral to the Attorney General or State Auditor if expenditures cannot be properly accounted for. SCC Executive Director or Conservation Commissioners may authorize changes to this policy or exemptions for individual projects or situations.

Section 8: Cost Share

In this section, you'll learn about:

- ✓ Rate of reimbursement
- ✓ Approved practice types
- ✓ Cultural resources
- ✓ Contract for Cost Share
- ✓ Cost share forms
- ✓ Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS)
- ✓ Partial payments
- ✓ Other cost share topics
- ✓ Frequently asked questions

Compliance with All Laws

Compliance with the project agreement, grant and contract program ~~policies~~matic guidelines, SCC policies, and all applicable federal, state, and local laws, orders, regulations, and permits, is required. Please contact SCC staff with any questions.

Cost Share Assistance Rate of Reimbursement

Cost share assistance projects on private property using SCC funding are authorized to be reimbursed at up to a maximum of 100 percent of the total project costs. In no case ~~shall~~will the reimbursement exceed 100 percent of the total project costs, including any other source of funding for the project. Cost share on publicly owned land is limited to 50 percent reimbursement.

SCC authorizes local conservation districts, Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Watershed Work Groups, and other entities to establish by resolution, cost-share rates up to 100 percent in association with ~~all~~ SCC grant cost share funding. Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), ~~Irrigation Efficiencies~~, and other programmatically prescribed cost share limitations are the exceptions.

The Cost Share Resolution and Labor Rate Form must be submitted.

~~When setting cost sharing rates, conservation districts or entities should consider:~~

- ~~• BMP cost and effectiveness in improving water quality.~~
- ~~• Availability of other sources of cost sharing.~~
- ~~• Local economic conditions.~~

- ~~• The public benefit to be derived from the practice.~~
- ~~• The convenience of the practice to the participant.~~

To remain in compliance, you must do the following with the form above:

- The form must be submitted at the start of each biennium. It's effective for the entire two-year period.
- The form establishes the cost share reimbursement rate and the participant reimbursement labor rate. The labor rate is limited to SCC's maximum.
- If changes need to be made during the biennium, a new form must be updated and submitted **before** the cost share contract is signed by the participant and district.
- If no form is submitted to SCC, the default rate of reimbursement will be 50 percent and \$25 per hour.

Participant Labor Rate

- The participant labor rate ~~shall~~will be set at a maximum of \$25 per hour for all individuals 18 years or older. The labor of minors aged 17 or younger ~~shall~~will be valued at the current Washington state minimum wage.
- This rate is set when submitting the [Cost Share Resolution and Labor Rate Form](#) mentioned above. It's valid for the entire grant period.

Approved Practice Types

Cost-share assistance is for practices identified as one of the following:

- Allowable Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Best Management Practices (BMPs).
- Alternative practices approved by a professional engineer licensed by the State of Washington.
- [SCC-approved program specific practices](#). These practices must be approved by SCC program managers prior to entering into an agreement with a participant.

If NRCS or engineer standards and specifications are not followed, the district or entity is responsible to get the contractor and/or participant to remedy to the standard. No payment will be issued by SCC until the BMP(s) meets the appropriate standards and specifications.

Programs Not Covered In This Policy

No board of supervisor's resolution stating the rate of reimbursement for SCC funds shall apply to CREP ~~and Irrigation Efficiencies~~ funding.

If additional directives are issued by another entity for funds (legislature, agency) that's explicit in programmatic limitations, these directives shall supersede the board resolution and will be written into the programmatic guidelines.

Publicly-Owned Property Eligibility

Publicly-owned property eligibility is defined as a title to the property that's held by federal, ~~tribal~~, state, local government, or special purpose districts, including public utilities.

Cost share assistance projects on publicly-owned property must be pre-approved by SCC staff. If approved by the Conservation Commission, the rate of reimbursement shall not exceed 50 ~~percent~~. To request an exception to this policy, you may submit a written request for a policy exception to your Regional Manager and SCC's CFO.

Districts must make sure that the public entity representative signing the Contract for Cost Share Funds or grant specific contract is in accordance with the programmatic guidelines, is authorized to commit the entity to maintain the practice(s) installed for the entire specified design life of the BMP.

Reimbursements Not To Exceed 100 Percent

If cost sharing with other partners on the same project, the conservation district or entity must identify all funds used on the project and the costs being reimbursed by all funding sources. This ensures the participant will not be overpaid beyond the total project costs.

Cost Sharing Budget

Unless identified in the Scope of Work for a particular program, there's no limit to the amount of funds from an individual grant budget that may be earmarked for cost sharing. However, there is a limit on the amount of cost share funds each participant may receive per fiscal year.

Cost Share Limits

SCC's established cost share limits are:

- \$100,000 award per landowner or cooperator, per fiscal year, across all SCC programs unless specifically stated otherwise in the programmatic guidelines of the grant program.
 - *Please note:* a single landowner or cooperator is limited to a \$100,000 award per fiscal year across all properties or businesses owned including leased property. A landowner or participant cooperator cannot receive a \$100,000 cost share award on one property under their personal name and apply for a \$100,000 award in the same fiscal year for cost share under an LLC owned by them.
- If the district or county has a compelling reason(s) to request an exception to this policy, you may submit a written request for a policy exception to your Regional Manager and SCC's Fiscal Manager; are encouraged to reach out to the program manger and your regional manger for guidance.

Cost Share Policy

The Cost Share Policy developed by each conservation district, VSP Watershed Work Group, or entity should give high priority for cost sharing BMPs that:

- Are part of a complete conservation plan.
- Are part of a watershed or riparian management plan or project.
- Have the greatest likelihood of improving water quality.
- Are listed in conservation districts' annual plans of work.
- Give a lower priority to BMPs that are outside a conservation plan.

If cost sharing a BMP that's not part of a conservation plan, the BMP should be designed to fit into the conservation needs of the whole operation or parcel and also not be detrimental to a possible future conservation plan.

Existing Additional Cost Share Policy

All other identified policies, procedures, and forms for SCC funds used for cost share assistance shall remain in effect. include:

- Receipts outlining costs and participant labor will continue to be required.
- All cost share projects are required to be uploaded into the CPDS along with "before" and "after" pictures, ~~acres addressed~~, natural resource benefit, planned and actual implementation measures etc.
- SCC Contract for Cost Share Funds must be printed from the Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS). No other form will be accepted unless directly outlined in specific programmatic guidelines. In this case, a separate cost share form will be supplied for district use by SCC. No changes may be made to the terms and conditions contained in the Contract for Cost Share. If changes are made, the contract is null and void and will not be reimbursed.

Debarment and Suspension

When federal grant funds are used to pay for all or a portion of goods or services, federal regulations require that the grantee ensure compliance with:

- State laws and entity policies related to procurement. Federal procurement requirements (see below) apply if there is no corresponding state law covering bid requirements.
- Suspension and Debarment (Federal Excluded Parties) on the [System for Award Management](#) website (this list is different than the one maintained by the State Department of Labor and Industries).
- Davis-Bacon Act (prevailing wage) requirements and all other federal grant laws must be followed.

A [SAM \(System for Award Management\)](#) search must be completed prior to entering any contractual arrangement. When the search is completed for each contractor or vendor, print the page from the website and place into the [grant or](#) contracting file. Make sure the date and time is printed in the header or footer of the document.

Not having the dated search documents printed and in the [grant or](#) contract file has been an automatic audit finding from the State Auditor in the past.

In accordance with [RCW 39.04.350](#), before award of a public works contract, a bidder must meet the following responsibility criteria to be considered a responsible bidder and qualified to be awarded a public works project.

- ~~One of the requirements is:~~ Not be disqualified from bidding on any public works contract under RCW [39.06.010](#) or [RCW 39.12.065\(3\)](#). Violations of RCW 39.12.065(3) can be found [here](#).
 - Note that this is for state debarment, not federal. The entity ~~should must~~ **print or electronically save** the search results to prove the contractor was not debarred at the time of bidding.

It is the sole responsibility of conservation districts to complete and document a SAM search and a State Labor & Industries search (link above) before awarding public works project contracts or subcontracting with any funding from SCC.

SCC strongly recommends the district conduct SAM and State Labor & Industries searches for all contractors or subcontractors for all funding awards for projects, regardless of funding source. All participants should be searched on the SAM system before any cost share project is approved for funding, regardless of funding source.

Guidance from the Washington State Auditor's Office

Compliance Requirements – Suspension and Debarment: Non-federal entities are prohibited from contracting with or making subawards under covered transactions to parties that are suspended or debarred. "Covered transactions" include contracts for goods and services awarded under a non-procurement transaction (e.g., grant or cooperative agreement) that are expected to equal or exceed \$25,000 or meet certain other criteria as specified in 2 CFR section 180.220. All non-procurement transactions entered into by a passthrough entity (i.e., subawards to subrecipients), irrespective of award amount, are considered covered transactions, unless they are exempt as provided in 2 CFR section 180.215. When a non-federal entity enters into a covered transaction with an entity at a lower tier, the nonfederal entity must verify that the entity, as defined in 2 CFR section 180.995 and agency adopting regulations, is not suspended or debarred or otherwise excluded from participating in the transaction.

This verification may be accomplished by

- (1) checking the System for Award Management (SAM) Exclusions maintained by the General Services Administration (GSA) and available at SAM.gov | Home (click on Search Record, then click on Advanced SearchExclusions) (Note: The OMB guidance at 2 CFR Part 180 and agency implementing regulations still refer to the SAM Exclusions as the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS)).
- (2) (2) collecting a certification from the entity, or
- (3) (3) adding a clause or condition to the covered transaction with that entity

(2 CFR section 180.300). Compliance Supplement 2024 3-I-3 May 2024 Compliance Requirements - Procurement And Suspension And Debarment Non-federal entities receiving contracts from the federal government are required to comply with the contract clause at FAR 52.209-6 before entering into a subcontract that will exceed \$30,000, other than a subcontract for a commercially available off-the-shelf item. Source of Governing Requirements – Suspension and Debarment The requirements for nonprocurement suspension and debarment are contained in OMB guidance in 2 CFR Part 180, which implements Executive Orders 12549 and 12689, “Debarment and Suspension,” federal awarding agency regulations in Title 2 of the CFR adopting/implementing the OMB guidance in 2 CFR Part 180; program legislation; and the terms and conditions of the award. Most federal agencies have adopted or implemented 2 CFR Part 180, generally by relocating their associated agency rules in Title 2 of the CFR. Appendix II to the Supplement includes the current CFR citations for all agencies adoption or implementation of the nonprocurement suspension and debarment guidance. Government-wide requirements related to suspension and debarment and doing business with suspended or debarred subcontractors under cost reimbursement contracts under the FAR are contained in 48 CFR section 9.405-2(b) and the clause at 48 CFR section 52.209-6.

~~**Suspension and Debarment:** Recipients of federal grants are prohibited from contracting with or making sub-awards to parties that are suspended or debarred from doing business with the federal government². For vendor contracts of \$25,000 or more and all sub-awards, the conservation district must ensure the vendor or sub-recipient is not suspended or debarred. The conservation district must check for suspended or debarred parties by reviewing the federal System for Award Management (SAM) issued by the U.S. General Services Administration. This requirement must be met prior to making the first payment to the contractor, vendor, or sub-recipient.~~

~~The suspension and debarment requirements apply to all contracts paid over \$25,000 and not only applied to the main contractor. The conservation district is responsible for communication with all contractors that they need to check the suspension and debarment status for any subcontractors or sub-recipients.~~

Cultural Resources

Projects funded by SCC must follow current policy and procedures regarding the protection of cultural resources. In addition, we encourage each district to develop good working relationships with local tribes that can help inform and support their conservation activities and protect cultural resources.

²-Per Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200 Title 48, Chapter 1, Subchapter B, Part 9: Contractor Qualifications

Cultural resources work must be done before project implementation begins or when the scope of the project changes.

Procedural guidance to implement [SCC Cultural Resources Policy](#) and the [Cultural Resources Complied Statement Form](#) can be found in the [Cultural Resources](#) page of our website.

The Cultural Resources Complied Statement Form is required for every cost share or district implemented project using SCC funding. It must be included when requesting reimbursement for cost share.

Visit the [Cultural Resources](#) page on our website for instructions on how to be reimbursed for these expenses.

Please contact [SCC's Cultural Resource Coordinator](#) with any questions.

Program Cost Share Awards

The district or entity will be notified of cost share award by SCC financial staff. Work on the project cannot begin until the award notification is received by the district or entity and the Contract for Cost Share has been signed.

- All cost share awards are allocated by BMP. Each BMP has an individual award amount that cannot be exceeded. If there are circumstances that require a modification to the BMP award amount, prior approval by SCC financial staff is required.

Contract for Cost Share Funds

Before cost share expenditures can be reimbursed, we need a completed copy of the Contract for Cost Share Funds for each participant. The Contract for Cost Share Funds must be printed from the [Conservation Practice Data System](#) (CPDS). No other form will be accepted unless directly outlined in specific programmatic guidelines. In this case, depending on grant program, SCC will supply the district or entity with a separate cost share form, or they can utilize their own if permitted. No changes may be made to the terms and conditions contained in the Contract for Cost Share. **If changes are made, the Contract for Cost Share is null and void and will not be reimbursed.**

The Contract for Cost Share Funds or grant specific contract, must be submitted with each of the following completed:

- **Table 1:** Planned Practices and Calculation of Funding Assistance (completed for each BMP that will be installed).
- **Terms of Contract:** Both the participant and an authorized signer must initial these sections of the contract before the BMPs are installed on the participant's property.
- **Before and After Photos:** We require before and after photographs of each BMP installed on a participant's property. These photos must be uploaded into the CPDS before payment will be made.

After BMPs are completely installed, the conservation district or entity may request a reimbursement of cost share by submitting a voucher that includes a copy of the Contract for Cost Share Funds or grant specific contract per the programmatic guidelines along with the backup receipts supporting the expenditures.

- [Appendix A: Cost Share Application BMP Worksheet](#) is not required when requesting reimbursement, but helpful when determining the cost of the BMP.
- [Appendix B: Cost Share Detail Receipt Worksheet](#) must be submitted for each separate BMP when requesting reimbursement.
- The [Cultural Resources Complied Statement Form](#) must be submitted for each project.

If multiple BMPs are awarded per the Contract for Cost Share Funds or grant specific contract per the programmatic guidelines, the conservation district or entity may request a partial payment of cost share on a completed BMP by submitting a voucher that includes the [Request for Partial Payment Form](#) along with the backup receipts supporting the expenditures. A partial payment cannot be requested for a BMP that has not been completed.

- In the case of cost sharing with a lessee, the entity owning the land, whether public or private, must also be a signatory to the Contract for Cost Share Funds or grant specific contract.
- Certain SCC grant programs require and/or allow the use of program-specific cost share forms. If you have a question about which cost share form to use or which procedures to apply, [consult SCC Financial staff](#).

If a district has cash flow concerns pertaining to reimbursing the cooperator, please consult with the program manager or their regional manager prior to signing the Contract for Cost Share.

Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS)

All projects receiving cost share funding must be entered into the CPDS.

Once the project is submitted, the Contract for Cost Share Funds must be printed from the system. This is the only cost share contract SCC will accept. The exception being special programs, in which case we'll provide or allow the grant-specific cost share agreement to all recipients. No changes may be made to the terms and conditions set forth in SCC's Contract for Cost Share Funds.

The following must be uploaded in the CPDS before payment can be made for cost share:

- "Before" and "after" pictures for each BMP.
- Planned and actual implementation measures for each BMP,
- Completion date for each BMP and/or project.

[View more information about CPDS and the CPDS Manual.](#)

Individual Contributed Services Form

This form is used by individuals who contribute multiple hours to one or more tasks related to installing the BMPs funded for the project. This form captures hours worked by all persons and their district's or entity's established rate.

The participant labor rate for all individuals the age of 18 or over ~~shall~~will be set at a maximum of \$25 per hour. The participant's use of minor labor, 17 years of age or younger, ~~shall~~will be consistent with Washington's established minimum wage.

One form is required for each month the cooperator performed work on the project. By completing, signing, and dating this form, a dollar amount can be determined for the services this individual contributed to the project. View the [Individual Contributed Services Form](#). If a district has a form that captures the required information, they may use that in lieu of the Individual Contributed Services Form.

Sourcing materials, ~~F~~uel costs and mileage won't be paid to participants with the Contract for Cost Share Funds. ~~Fuel costs and mileage are~~These items considered a cost of doing business and will not be reimbursed to the participant.

Cost Share Application BMP Worksheet – Appendix A (Optional)

The [Cost Share Application BMP Worksheet](#) is used to help accurately predict how much each BMP will cost to implement.

- Each BMP will be listed on a separate form.
- If using multiple sources of funding (e.g., SCC and Ecology on the same contract), use Section 5 to breakdown the costs.
- Funding from all sources cannot exceed 100 percent of the total project cost.
- This form isn't required to be submitted when requesting reimbursement from SCC.

Cost Share Detail Receipt Form – Appendix B (Required)

The [Cost Share Detail Receipt Form](#) is used to summarize all of the costs associated with the cost share.

- Labor is summarized in the top portion and is used for participant labor only. This must be accompanied by the [Individual Contributed Services Form](#).
- Material is summarized in the bottom portion. All receipts from the cost share must be listed and included for backup when submitting reimbursement.
- The district's or entity's cost share percentage will go in the "% Charged" gray section. It will auto-sum the total amount to be reimbursed.
- One form is required to be filled out for each BMP that reimbursement is being requested for. This is required to ensure each BMP is not exceeding the awarded amount per BMP.

Cost Share for Conservation District Associate Supervisors and District Staff

Please contact the [financial staff](#) or [your regional manager](#) before approving the Contract for Cost Share Funds. Cost share for Associate Supervisors and conservation district staff may not be reimbursed more than the state ethics laws covering municipal officers.

- Associate supervisors and conservation district employees, as municipal officers, are limited to receiving \$~~1,500~~3,000 in cost share assistance per calendar month per [RCW 42.23.030 \(6\)](#).
- Supervisors are exempt from this restriction per RCW 89.08.220 (4).
- Please see the ~~Cost Share—Supervisors, Associates, Employees DO Brief 2-2008~~[Cost Share and Financial Assistance Participation by Supervisors, Associates, Employees District Operations Brief](#) and [Code of Ethics for Municipal Officers](#) for more information.

~~Received Donated Real Property~~

~~Received donated real property is property acquired at less than its appraised market value.~~

~~Donated Labor~~

~~Donated labor is time provided by a person without compensation. Labor donations are valued at an hourly rate of pay, not to exceed SCC's established maximum rate, excluding taxes, benefits, and overtime.~~

~~For travel to and from the worksite, claim either the hourly labor donation rate or the mileage—not both. If claiming mileage, donation time starts once the volunteer has arrived at the project site and begins work.~~

~~Donated Labor Documentation~~

~~Records must be maintained to verify volunteer hours spent on a project. These records must include the following information:~~

- ~~• Individual's name.~~
- ~~• Contact information.~~
- ~~• Dates of service.~~
- ~~• Worksite or location name.~~
- ~~• Description of work performed.~~
- ~~• Hours worked.~~
- ~~Individual or crew leader signature and date.~~

~~SCC's Individual Contributed Services Form must be submitted to document donated labor time. If the volunteer's time is coordinated by a third-party organization, you must maintain the same level of information.~~

Establishing the Rate

~~Using donated labor requires adoption by resolution of an hourly rate not to exceed SCC's approved maximum.~~

- ~~• The hourly rate for persons aged 18 and over is \$25.00 per hour.~~
- ~~• If the person is 17 years of age or younger, the rate is the published Washington state minimum wage.~~

Department of Corrections Labor

~~Department of Corrections (DOC) labor is work performed by inmates or people performing community services instead of a fine or jail time. To value the labor, use the standard labor rate guidance above.~~

~~A labor donation is the difference between the standard labor rate and what DOC is paid for the corrections labor.~~

Donated Equipment or Tool Use

~~Donated equipment or tool use occurs when a third party donates the use of equipment or tools with a replacement value of \$1,000 or more. The maximum rate allowable may not exceed the rental rate for comparable equipment or tools in the project area or the local USDA Farm Service Agency cost share rate. The total amount reported to all SCC projects combined cannot exceed the replacement value of the equipment or tools.~~

~~Donated equipment or tool use does not include operator services.~~

Donated Materials and Supplies

~~Materials and supplies are considered donated when they are given to the project at no cost. The reported value of donated materials is the market value of the materials or supplies at the time used.~~

Donated Services

~~Services are considered donated when they are provided by a third-party organization at a reduced or no cost. Some examples include surveys, appraisals, and engineering services. Retain a copy of the invoice or letter from the organization acknowledging the donation and its value.~~

~~Donated Vehicle Mileage and Animal Stock Use~~

~~Mileage donated to the project is limited to the current state rate. Stock animals, such as pack animals, are valued at no more than the local USDA Farm Service Agency rate for each animal.~~

Methods of Payment

All receipts are required to be submitted with the voucher requesting reimbursement, including partial payment requests.

- Two-party checks are prohibited.
- A conservation district or entity must make cost share payments directly to a participant on a reimbursement basis only, unless the Assignment of Payment form is used.⁻
- If a conservation district chooses to follow [RCW 89.08.220 \(6\)](#)³, the conservation district must include with their voucher request for reimbursement the following:
 - Conservation district's receipt for materials purchased on behalf of the participant from the vendor.
 - Conservation district's invoice to the participant requesting reimbursement for the materials purchased on behalf of the participant.
 - A copy of the check from the participant to the conservation district proving that reimbursement to the conservation district from the participant has been made for the materials purchased.
- All materials must be purchased after the award date of BMP funding on the award notification provided by SCC and the Contract for Cost Share.
- We reserve the right to ask for additional documentation and information on a case-by-case basis.

Partial Payment of Cost Share Award

A conservation district or entity may request reimbursement for a partial payment of cost share from SCC for BMPs included in the Contract for Cost Share Funds or programmatic specific contract that are implemented in phases. A partial payment request can only be submitted when one or more BMPs on the Contract for Cost Share Funds are fully completed and there are other BMPs in the contract still being worked on. Only the fully completed BMP(s) will be reimbursed. Partially completed BMPs aren't eligible for reimbursement until they have been completed per NRCS specifications.

Partial cost share reimbursement requests to SCC must include a copy of the [Cost Share Partial Payment Request Form](#), the Contract for Cost Share Funds or grant specific contract, appropriate receipts, [Cost Share Detail Receipt Worksheet](#), and be included on a voucher for payment.

³ If the conservation district chooses the option provided under [RCW 89.08.220 \(6\)](#), no exceptions will be made to the documentation required. SCC will only issue reimbursement if all the defined documentation is present for each cost incurred or reimbursement.

Once the final payment on the Contract for Cost Share is requested, a copy of the Cost Share Partial Payment Request Form needs to be submitted with the final payment information filled out along with the fully signed Contract for Cost Share.

Assignment of Payment

The [Assignment of Payment Form](#) is used to help alleviate cash flow issues for SCC funded projects. This form allows the participant to assign their cost share payment from the district or entity directly over to the contractor doing the work on the project.

The participant, district or entity, and contractor all sign the Assignment of Payment Form. A copy is given to each party. Once the project is finished and the district or entity has reimbursed the contractor in accordance with the form, a request for reimbursement may be made to SCC. A copy of the Assignment of Payment Form must be included with the Contract for Cost Share Funds or programmatic specific contract and all other cost share documentation when requesting reimbursement.

1099 – G Issuance to Landowners Receiving Cost Share

SCC worked in conjunction with the Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) and the IRS to provide additional information regarding the issuance of the form 1099-G Certain Government Payments to landowners receiving cost-share assistance.

A [District Operations Brief](#) was published January 2017.

Retroactive Payments Prohibited

No retroactive cost-share payments shall be made under SCC's cost sharing program.

For purposes of this policy, the effective date of a Contract for Cost Share Funds is the date the conservation district chair or authorized signatory signs the contract as approved for funding, not the date the participant signs it. There may be specific grant programmatic exceptions to this rule.

The term "retroactive" refers to any time prior to the date of the chair or authorized signatory's signature.

SCC will not reimburse the conservation district, entity, participant, or ~~landowner~~ cooperator

for any receipts/charges that occurred before the effective date of the Contract for Cost Share Funds.

All technical assistance costs must be vouchered for in the fiscal year they are incurred in.

The exemption to this policy would be cost share reimbursements. These costs may be vouchered for when BMP(s) are completed and the cooperator is reimbursed in accordance with the grant funding requirements. All cost share funding must be vouchered for and completed by the end of the fiscal year if funded through operating funds or the end of the biennium if funded through capital funding.

Maintenance or Operation of Existing BMPs

Maintenance or operation of existing BMPs is not allowable for funding unless specifically approved in the grant programmatic guidelines. However, cost sharing may be used to repair existing BMPs damaged or destroyed by acts of nature. An “act of nature” is defined as an occurrence, especially a disaster, that’s due entirely to the forces of nature and that could not reasonably have been prevented.

Conservation districts or entities considering the use of cost share dollars for repair of existing BMPs destroyed by an act of nature ~~should~~must consider the cost-effectiveness of the repair, whether the design criteria is adequate, and if the public benefit outweighs private gain.

Equipment Usage

If a participant owns equipment needed to install BMPs in accordance ~~to~~with the Contract for Cost Share this is considered an eligible expense and can be considered for cost share reimbursement.

If the participant owns the equipment, the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) rate will be used to establish the hourly rate cost. If the local FSA rate is not available or representative of area rates, the district can use and average of two local bids from an equipment rental ~~company~~company, the NRCS rate, or the district can adopt their own equipment usage rates based on local rates and board resolution- The charge will go under labor for the project.

- **Example:** If a participant owns a large tractor and the local FSA rate is \$80/hour, then the participant will be reimbursed \$80/hour for his/her time spent on the tractor performing work on the approved BMPs. This is the max per hour the participant can be reimbursed and includes the \$25/hour typical participant hourly charge.

If the participant rents equipment from a company, an invoice will be obtained and charged as materials for the project.

Work Crews

The use of contracted work crews, such as Ecology’s Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) are allowable under most grant programs. A district or entity may contract with a work crew to perform work.

The following needs to be adhered to when subcontracting with work crews:

- The charges for the work crew will be coded to the outcome the work applied to.
- The contract between the district and work crew must be on file with SCC.
- When billing, the invoice from the work crew entity or supplemental backup from the district must be clearly broken down by project with the corresponding backup included.

The district may choose to use their awarded technical assistance or cost share funding to pay for the work crew.

Conservation District Staff Installing/Constructing Cost Share Projects

Conservation districts may employ their own work crew or have staff conduct installation/construction work on the project but are prohibited from charging the same hours worked to multiple grants. These staff hours to implement a BMP may be charged to the cost share portion of the grant award upon completion of a BMP or project.

- The staff timesheets must break out the time worked directly on BMP implementation separately from technical assistance work.
- All conservation district staff must have a current Composite Rate Form on file with SCC.
- Conservation districts must ensure that any staff conducting work in the field and installing/constructing projects have the correct industrial insurance codes and rates paid for those hours worked.
- ~~The conservation district Work Crew form will be required when requesting reimbursement for district staff time spent implementing a cost shared BMP.~~

Unique Situations

If a conservation district or entity believes cost sharing a BMP in a unique situation will have a demonstrable, positive natural resources impact, a request for cost sharing approval from SCC will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

“A unique situation” is one that’s outside the policy established and contained in this manual and/or in the General Terms and Conditions attached to Conservation District Master Contract. This may also apply to any contract established with SCC. The approval process for unique situations is the same as for cost share appeals shown below.

~~Cost-Share Appeals~~

~~If your district has a compelling reason(s) to request a variance to an aspect of SCC cost share policy or programmatic guidelines, you may submit a written request for a policy exception to your Regional Manager. The request must state the nature of the hardship or special circumstances, the policy or policies you are seeking a variance to and specifically what the variance or variations would be.~~

~~The following is the process for appeals:~~

- ~~All appeals must be made in writing, signed, or originating from (an email is acceptable) by the conservation district chair or designee, and sent to SCC Regional Manager.~~

- ~~• An SCC Regional Manager will review your appeal with other SCC staff, including finance staff, in a timely manner and present your appeal to the Executive Director.~~
- ~~• The SCC Executive Director may choose to decide on the appeal or bring the appeal to the next regular Commission meeting, at the Executive Director's discretion.~~
- ~~• Decisions made by the Executive Director may be appealed to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission to be heard at the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting.~~

Location of BMPs

- Cost sharing may be used in urban areas and on rural farms and ranches located within conservation district boundaries. Projects funded in urban areas must meet the same requirements as those funded on agricultural land.
- In the case of cost sharing with a lessee, the entity owning the land, whether public or private, must also be a signatory to the Contract for Cost Share Funds.

Cost of BMPs

Projecting costs of BMPs ~~shall~~will be based on local cost data, FSA data, or established NRCS contract cost lists. Operators ~~shall~~will be allowed to obtain their own bids for installation of BMPs. The cost data and bids ~~should~~must be kept as backup in the district grant or cost share contract file.

BMP Installation Using Materials Already Owned by Participant

These material costs are reimbursable under SCC's grant programs. However, to determine the appropriate reimbursement rate, materials must be priced using an average of three local bids.

- The participant must provide a listing of materials on hand and sign/date the bottom. This backup needs to be included with the contract for reimbursement.
- Costs must be itemized on the [Appendix B: Cost Share Receipt Detail Form](#).
- Please note the use of materials on-hand is a rare occurrence. Pre-purchasing materials before the Contract for Cost Share Funds or program specific contract has been approved by the board or materials purchased for a project that couldn't be finished by the end of the grant or contract and calling them materials on hand is not allowed. These costs aren't eligible for reimbursement.

Participant as Contractor

If a participant is going use his/her own contracting business to perform the work on their own project awarded with SCC funding, the following rules apply:

- The contractor and or subcontractors must be licensed and bonded to do business in the State of Washington and to do the work in the appropriate discipline that is directly related to the practice(s). The participant if acting as the contractor must be licensed and bonded.

- The participant is required to get at least two additional bids for the project. Copies of the bids must be submitted to the conservation district when requesting reimbursement. These copies must also be submitted to SCC. If a participant cannot secure more than one additional bid, document the reason why for the district file.
- The participant is required to submit all receipts for the project along with the itemized invoice to the conservation district when requesting reimbursement.

If a participant is not a licensed contractor but doing the work, they're subject to the participant labor reimbursement rate established by the conservation district not to exceed \$25 per hour.

Maintenance of BMPs

Operators or participants shall agree to maintain BMPs cost shared under this program for the design life of the BMPs, as determined by FSA and/or NRCS standards, or as determined by a licensed professional engineer.

If the practice isn't maintained for the entire design life, the participant will be in violation of the Contract for Cost Share ~~Funds~~. The participant will be liable to repay the state for practices installed. The only exception to this is practices destroyed by an "act of nature".

Annual Proof of Performance will be established in the Contract for Cost Share ~~Funds~~ between the district or entity and the participant. This will outline the annual check in on the BMP(s) status for the entire design life of the project in accordance with the Contract for Cost Share.

Implementation Monitoring

- SCC aims to monitor 25 percent of the completed cost share projects put on the ground to validate compliance with the agency policy, programmatic guidelines and consistent with the terms specified in the Contract for Cost Share.
- Conservation districts or entities will be notified when their project is selected for monitoring and a date to review the project will be scheduled with the regional manager and other SCC staff, as appropriate.
- All efforts to group together monitoring visits will be made.

Other Grant Programs and Cost Sharing

Other special purpose grant programs may include their own unique cost sharing policies. An example of this is the ~~Irrigation Efficiencies Grants~~ Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. These policies are spelled out in that program's programmatic guidelines, the ~~grant~~ contract, and often on SCC website. [Contact SCC financial staff](#) or the grant program manager for additional information on special grant programs.

Cost-Share Appeals

If your district has a compelling reason(s) to request a variance to an aspect of SCC cost share policy or programmatic guidelines, you may submit a written request for a policy exception to your Regional Manager. The request must state the nature of the hardship or special circumstances, the policy or policies you are seeking a variance to and specifically what the variance or variations would be.

The following is the process for appeals:

- All appeals must be made in writing, signed, or originating from (an email is acceptable) by the conservation district chair or designee, and sent to SCC Regional Manager.
- An SCC Regional Manager will review your appeal with other SCC staff, including finance staff, in a timely manner and present your appeal to the Executive Director.
- The SCC Executive Director may choose to decide on the appeal or bring the appeal to the next regular Commission meeting, at the Executive Director's discretion.

Decisions made by the Executive Director may be appealed to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission to be heard at the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting.

Cost-Sharing Questions and Answers

If one of our participants requested cost share on a practice that cost \$150,000 to implement, how much could the district reimburse him/her?

No more than \$100,000 per landowner or cooperator, per fiscal year. The individual practice reimbursement may vary by program and by practice. Cost share reimbursement limits are established by SCC and reviewed annually.

How can a participant make up their share of a cost shared practice?

The participant's share is typically made up of out-of-pocket cash and/or in-kind labor billed at a max of \$25/hour for time.

How is a participant's in-kind contribution figured?

The amount of SCC's cost sharing is based on the total cost of the BMP. If a participant furnishes labor, materials, or equipment as in-kind, they become a part of the total cost, and must be factored in up-front before the conservation district decides how much cost sharing the participant is eligible to receive. Also, participants providing in-kind contributions must furnish the conservation district or entity with invoices detailing allowable costs.

Can a participant receive a partial payment of cost share?

A participant can receive reimbursement on a fully completed practice when there are other BMPs to implement in the Contract for Cost Share Funds by submitting Cost Share Partial Payment Form and supplying the receipts for the purchases and expenses. However, SCC may not allow partial payments of cost share over fiscal year or biennium periods depending on funding source.

Who determines the cost of BMP implementation?

You may obtain information on the cost of specific BMPs in its area from the NRCS cost list or from data in the NRCS Field Office Computing System (FOCS) or from recent historical data in the local FSA or conservation district office. Where this data is not available, you may determine costs for BMPs based on at least three quotes **or bids** of responsible local vendors and/or conservation districts. SCC staff can assist with determining an allowable cost.

When can my conservation district or entity appeal the cost share policy?

You may appeal the cost share rate and/or the total dollar amount allowed per participant. You must show that the existing policy will not allow sufficient funding to accomplish a significant public benefit, or that a unique situation exists that precludes sufficient participant match or cost sharing from another source. You may request approval to cost share in a unique situation where a practice isn't a recognized BMP but will provide a demonstrable water quality **or public** benefit.

Can my conservation district or entity cost share with another public entity?

Yes, after approval by SCC. If approved, the Contract for Cost Share Funds is required. A conservation district or entity can cost share with municipalities or counties, or other public entities **(except federal)**, if the practice meets the same requirements as those on private lands. The maximum authorized cost share is 50 percent. The district or entity must ensure the individual signing the Contract for Cost Share Funds is authorized to commit the entity to uphold the practices for the entire design life as specified in the contract.

Can my conservation district or entity cost share more than once with the same participant in the same biennium?

Yes. ~~Yes.~~ your conservation district or entity may cost share more than once with the same participant (up to the cost-share dollar limit.) when that participant is implementing a complete conservation plan involving several cost shareable practices. Our cost share limit is \$100,000 per participant, per fiscal year across all programs. Please note: A landowner or **participant-cooperator** cannot receive \$100,000 cost-share award on one property under their personal name and apply for \$100,000 in the same fiscal year for cost share under an LLC owned by them.

Will there be an audit on cost share funding activities?

The State Auditor will audit your conservation district or entity, and SCC may audit any grant or contract at any time.

What is the procedure for participants who default on the Contract for Cost Share Funds?

If a participant does default on the terms of the Contract for Cost Share Funds, you must attempt to recover the amount of the cost share (depreciated based on design life).

How do I determine when BMPs were installed retroactively (and are therefore ineligible for cost sharing)?

The term "retroactive" applies to any expenses related to BMPs that were incurred before the date your conservation district chair or authorized signatory signed the Contract for Cost Share Funds or award notification from SCC. The participant's signature on the Contract for Cost Share Funds does not represent an approval to incur costs. Your conservation district chair or authorized signatory's signature represents board approval and is also the effective date of the contract.

Can I provide cost share for a demonstration project?

Yes, if your district wishes to demonstrate new or innovative conservation practices, it may pay up to 100% for such practices on private or public land on a one-time basis. The BMPs demonstrated must show local landusers how new technology or innovative methods can reduce water pollution and conserve natural resources. Again, demonstration sites must incorporate practices that are truly new or innovative, and your district may pay for them completely, but only once.

Can a Contract for Cost Share Funds be revised after it has been signed by the participant and district?

Yes, on a case-by-case basis. The district or entity must work with SCC financial staff or your regional manager to request a change to the Contract for Cost Share Funds after the contract has been signed by both the participant and the district. An example of this would be the project came in under budget and the participant would like to add a BMP using the existing funding award. SCC financial staff will guide you on how to make the changes. An updated Contract for Cost Share Funds may be required to be resigned, re-initialed and/or reapproved by the board. There can be no changes to the Contract for Cost Share Funds after the BMPs and project have been completed.

Who can answer other questions on the cost sharing program?

Feel free to call [SCC financial staff](#) or your [regional manager](#).

Section 9: District-Implemented Project

In this section, you'll learn about:

- ✓ Rate of reimbursement
- ✓ Eligible practices
- ✓ Cultural resources
- ✓ Landowner Agreements
- ✓ Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS)
- ✓ Partial payments
- ✓ Frequently Asked Questions

District-Implemented Project (DIP)

A district-implemented project (DIP) is a project where the district is the lead planner and implementer of the work. A DIP is different from a cost-share project where the landowner is in the lead. 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, **and any other public works project compliance requirements**. A DIP must not include cost-sharing or cash reimbursement to a landowner(s) or land manager(s) with SCC funds. The district is assuming all responsibility for project planning and construction directly. The DIP project structure option is only available to conservation districts. Please see the [District Implemented Project Decision Tree in Attachment A](#) for assistance with determining if a cost share or DIP approach is best for your project or contact your regional manager.

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

If a conservation district does not complete a DIP as planned, without a compelling reason, the district's eligibility to utilize the DIP structure may be suspended.

Eligible Practice Types

A DIP project may be implemented using one of the following practice types:

- Allowable NRCS Best Management Practices (BMPs).
- Alternative practices approved by a professional engineer licensed by the State of Washington.

- [SCC-approved program specific practices](#). These practices must be approved by SCC program managers prior to entering into an agreement with a participant.

If NRCS or engineer standards and specifications are not followed, the district is responsible to get the contractor and/or participant to remedy to the standard.

Cultural Resources

Projects funded by SCC must follow current policy and procedures regarding the protection of cultural resources. In addition, we encourage each district to develop good working relationships with local tribes that can help inform and support their conservation activities and protect cultural resources. Cultural resources work must be done before project implementation begins or when the scope of the project changes.

Procedural guidance to implement the [SCC Cultural Resources Policy](#) and the [Cultural Resources Complied Statement Form](#) can be found in the [Cultural Resources](#) page of our website.

The Cultural Resources Complied Statement Form is required for every district implemented project using SCC funding. It must be included when requesting reimbursement.

~~*The Cultural Resources Complied Statement Form is required for every district implemented project using SCC funding. It must be included when requesting reimbursement.*~~

Visit the [Cultural Resources](#) page on our website for instructions on how to be reimbursed for these expenses.

Please contact [SCC's Cultural Resource Coordinator](#) with any questions.

Conservation District Staff Installing/Constructing Projects

Conservation district staff may conduct DIP installation/construction work on the project but are prohibited from charging the same hours worked to multiple grants. The only staff hours that may be charged to a DIP project are for actual implementation of the BMP. These staff hours to ~~construct~~ implement a ~~DIP-BMP~~ can be charged to the installation/construction portion of an SCC grant and must be vouchered for on a monthly basis. ~~monthly.~~ Administrative hours, project oversight, and general staff time must be charged to the TA portion of the award, not to the DIP allocation.

- The staff timesheets must break out the time worked directly on DIP installation/construction separately from technical assistance work.
- All CD staff must have a current Composite Rate Form on file with SCC.
- Conservation districts must ensure that any staff conducting work in the field and installing/constructing projects have the correct industrial insurance codes and rates paid for those hours worked.

- All hours ~~must be charged to the grant monthly~~ worked on installation of the DIP project must be vouchered for on a monthly basis. Administrative, technical assistance and project implementation are eligible to charge up to 25% overhead.

District Landowner Agreement

The district must provide a copy of the district's Landowner Agreement and Cultural Resource Complied Statement form when requesting the first reimbursement from SCC. SCC provides a Landowner Agreement template for district use, if desired. Additional guidance is outlined in the programmatic guidelines for each grant program.

A district may also use their own version of a Landowner Agreement which must:

- Be signed and dated by a district authorized signatory.
- Be signed and dated by the landowner.
- Include the BMP(s) or description of work being installed.

~~The District Landowner Agreement must be submitted along with the following completed:~~

- ~~• After work approved in the grant agreement is completed, the conservation district may request a reimbursement by submitting a voucher that includes a copy of the District Landowner Agreement along with the backup receipts supporting the expenditures.~~
- ~~• Appendix B: Detail Receipt Worksheet must be submitted when requesting reimbursement breaking out the receipts to show which costs are associated with each landowner.~~
- ~~• The Cultural Resources Complied Statement Form must be submitted for each project.~~

Districts will submit reimbursement requests for all DIP costs on a **monthly** basis, **when expenditures have been paid**. Once a DIP project has been completed, the following must be submitted when requesting final reimbursement from SCC on the project:

- The DIP Closeout Form. This form summarizes the landowners, CPDS Participant ID numbers and BMPs completed.
- The "Closeout" tab in CPDS must be filled out for each BMP the district has completed under the District Landowner Agreement.

Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS)

All projects receiving SCC project funding must be entered into the CPDS.

The following must be uploaded in the CPDS upon completion of the DIP:

- Before" and "after" pictures for each BMP.
- Planned and actual implementation measures for each BMP.
- Completion date for each BMP and/or project.

[View more information about CPDS and the CPDS Manual.](#)

Work Crews

The use of work crews, such as Ecology's Washington Conservation Corps (WCC), are allowable under most grant programs. A district may contract with a work crew directly to perform work.

The following needs to be adhered to when subcontracting with work crews:

- The contract between the district and work crew must be on file with SCC.
- When billing, the invoice from the work crew entity or supplemental backup from the district must be clearly broken down by project with the corresponding backup included.

If a district employs its own work crew, copies of the individual's timesheets must be included when vouchering SCC broken out by funded project. Please refer to the Conservation District Staff Installing/Constructing Projects section outlined in this chapter for full guidance.

Maintenance of BMPs

The maintenance responsibility of the BMPs will be included in the District Landowner Agreement. The BMPs must be maintained for the design life of the BMPs, as determined by FSA and/or NRCS standards, or as determined by a licensed professional engineer.

If the practice isn't maintained for the entire design life, the responsible party as outlined in the District Landowner Agreement will be liable to repay the state for practices installed. The only exception to this is practices destroyed by an "act of nature."

Implementation Monitoring

- SCC aims to monitor 25 percent of the completed projects put on the ground to validate compliance with the agency policy and, programmatic guidelines.
- Districts will be notified when their project is selected for monitoring and a date to review the project will be scheduled with the regional manager and other SCC staff, as appropriate.
- All efforts to group together monitoring visits will be made.

Other Grant Programs and DIPS

Other special purpose grant programs may include their own unique DIP policies. An example of this is the CREP Program. These policies are spelled out in that program's programmatic guidelines, the contract, and often on SCC website. Contact SCC financial staff or the grant program manager for additional information on special grant programs.

•

Frequently Asked Questions

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

A district-implemented project (DIP) is not a cost-share project so SCC policies that apply to cost share specifically do not apply to a district-implemented project.

Does SCC have a landowner agreement template?

SCC provides a [Landowner Agreement template](#) for district use, if desired. A district may also use their own version of a landowner agreement.

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

SCC utilizes CPDS to compile metrics on accomplishments for our grant programs. We must be able to efficiently report out to the legislature and others what the public investment of funds is buying. CPDS is our current method of collecting this information from conservation districts.

We are using our district staff and work crew to implement the project. How do we voucher for reimbursement for the hours?

If a district is using district staff to implement the project, the project time will be billed to the DIP grant allocation outcome monthly as costs are incurred.

Who can answer other questions on a district implemented project?

Feel free to call [SCC financial staff](#) or your [regional Manager](#).

Section 10: Other Requirements

In this section, you'll learn about:

- ✓ Compliance with all laws
- ✓ Federal audit requirements
- ✓ State audit requirements
- ✓ SCC sponsor monitoring
- ✓ Record retention
- ✓ Property and equipment
- ✓ Disposition of property
- ✓ Bidding and contracting

Compliance with All Laws

You must comply fully with the contract terms, grant programmatic guidelines, SCC policies, and all applicable federal, state, and local laws, orders, regulations, and permits. Please [contact your regional manager](#) with any questions.

All work performed under the grant or contract and any equipment purchased will be made available to SCC and to any authorized state, federal, or local representative for inspection at any time during the grant or contract timeframe and for at least three years following grant or contract termination or dispute resolution.

Federal Audit Requirements

The Office of Management and Business (OMB) issued the [Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards \(Uniform Guidance\)](#) to clarify and streamline the federal guidance. The Uniform Guidance supersedes the following OMB Circulars: A-21, A-50, A-87, A-89, A-102, A-110, A-122, and A-133.

The ~~major~~ **OMB** audit policy changes target audit requirements on the risk of waste, fraud and abuse, and raise the dollar threshold for requirement of a single audit to \$~~750,000~~1,000,000 or more in expenditures in an entity's fiscal year.

Failure to complete the audit or receive an extension by the due date will result in suspension of all agreements and reimbursements. Extensions only can be granted by the federal agency responsible for implementing the requirements of the Single Audit Act for your organization.

If there's an audit finding, the district or entity may be asked to submit a corrective action plan to SCC and work with their regional manager to address the resolutions of the findings.

State Auditor Requirements

All funds paid to conservation districts or entities are subject to an audit per the requirements of [RCW 43.09](#). State and local governments will be audited by the Washington State Auditor's Office.

Expenses for an audit are grant reimbursement-allowable expenses under the district's Implementation grant.

Audit Findings or Management Letter

Conservation districts or entities are required to notify their regional manager SCC if they receive a finding or a management letter from the Office of State Auditor. Monthly payment requests with all supporting documentation for all grants or contracts may be required for a period of 12 months after the date of the finding or management letter. SCC reserves the right to review all cases of audit findings and adjust the documentation requirements. Audit findings or management letters may also be subject to CAPP requirements.

SCC Grant and Contract Compliance Oversight

SCC reviews all grant or contract costs for each voucher processed and may conduct additional compliance oversight, which could include requests for backup documentation and visits to the district or entity's office. This monitoring is a more detailed review of the district or entity's source financial documents and reports. Although the district or entity is required to maintain copies of all documentation, please don't submit this to SCC unless requested to do so.

Records Retention

The Office of the Secretary of State Washington State Archives works with the Local Records Committee in accordance with [RCW 40.14.070](#) to determine and update the records retention schedules for all state agencies and local governments each entity is required to follow.

The records retention schedule authorizes the destruction/transfer of the public records of all local government agencies relating to the common functions of the management of the agency, management of the agency's assets, finances, human resources, and information resources. It is to be used in conjunction with the other approved schedules that relate to the functions of the agency.

Current approved records retention schedules for Local Government, also referred to as [Common Records Retention Schedule \(CORE\)](#) can be accessed online.

- The overall managing of conservation district records can be found [here](#).
- Records pertaining to landowner agreements retention can be found [here](#).

Keep the following original documents on file in accordance with the [Secretary of State Records Retention Schedule](#) after project close-out may include but is not limited to:

- Invoices and receipts.
- Vouchers.
- Timesheets.
- Copies of payments (checks, warrants, bank statements, etc.).
- Copies of internal transactions.
- Travel and mileage logs.
- Records pertaining to a use allowance for sponsor-owned equipment.
- Competitive bidding documentation.
- Donation logs and statements.
- All books, records, documents, data, and other materials relevant to the grant agreement.

The records must support all project-related costs reported and be made available upon request. If any litigation, claim, or audit is started before the end of the retention period, you must keep the records until all litigation, claims, or audit findings involving the records have been resolved.

The conservation district or entity will maintain complete program, contract, and financial records for each grant or contract to provide an audit trail for all expenditures.

If the funding source is federal, all grant or contract files need to be kept in accordance with the federal-established records retention schedule.

Construction Records

Engineering documentation and field inspection reports of all construction work accomplished under the grant or contract will be maintained. Such records will clearly indicate total receipts and expenditures by fund source and budget object classification.

Length of Retention

Comply with the records retention schedule for conservation districts or entities as outlined in the Secretary of State's *Records Management Guidelines and [Records Retention Schedule](#)*.

Retain all statistical, property, materials inventory, and supply records and supporting documentation for a period in accordance with Secretary of State Records Retention Schedule from the termination of the grant or contract.

Retain records for non-expendable property for a period in accordance with Secretary of State Records Retention Schedule after the final disposition of the property.

If any litigation or audit is begun, or a claim is instituted involving the grant, contract or subcontract covered by the records, retain the related records for three years after the litigation, audit, or claim has been finally resolved.

All grant or contract records will be open for audit or inspection by SCC or by any duly authorized audit representative of the state of Washington for a period of at least six years after the final grant or contract payment or any dispute resolutions.

If any such audits identify discrepancies in the financial records, the conservation district or entity will make clarification and/or adjustments accordingly.

Cost share retention begins after the design life of the BMP(s) listed in the Contract for Cost Share Funds or District Implemented Project Landowner Agreement has been fully completed.

Property and Equipment Management – General Principles

Equipment

Equipment is considered tangible personal property which is used in operations and has a useful life of more than one year. Some examples are furnishings, tools, and computer hardware and software. Equipment may be attached to a structure for purposes of securing the item, but unless it is permanently attached to, or an integral part of, the building or structure, it is classified as equipment and not real property.

Intangible Personal Property

Copyrights: This is a form of protection grounded in the U.S. Constitution and granted by law for original works of authorship fixed in a tangible medium of expression. Copyright covers both published and unpublished works.

SCC reserves a royalty-free, non-exclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use and authorize others to use the copyright in any work developed wholly or in part under the grant or contract for SCC or other state purposes. This license also applies to any copyright that a conservation district or entity purchases with state funds.

Please see the Washington State's Office of the Attorney General for more guidance on [copyright law](#).

Publications: Appropriate credit will be given to SCC when the entity, conservation district, or persons employed by the entity or conservation district: uses or publishes information of SCC; present papers, lectures, or seminars involving information supplied by SCC; uses logos, reports, maps or other data, printed reports, signs, brochures, pamphlets, images, etc.

Personal property

Personal property is property of any kind except real property. It may be tangible (having physical existence) such as equipment and supplies; or intangible (having no physical existence) such as patents, inventions, and copyrights.

Copyright: Again, this is a form of protection grounded in the U.S. Constitution and granted by law for original works of authorship fixed in a tangible medium of expression. Copyright covers both published and unpublished works.

Patent defined: A patent grants the patent holder the exclusive right to exclude others from making, using, importing and selling the patented innovation for a limited period of time. The U.S. Patent Act, [35 U.S.C. §§ 1 et seq.](#), was enacted by Congress under its Constitutional grant of authority to secure for limited times to inventors the exclusive right to their discoveries. See [Article I, Section 8, Clause 8](#).

Real property

Real property refers to land, including land improvements, structures and items added or attached to them, excluding movable machinery and equipment. SCC contract or grant projects do not include the purchase of real property.

Supplies

All tangible personal property other than equipment.

Tangible personal property

Title: The conservation district or entity retains title to tangible personal property acquired under the grant or contract.

Use: The conservation district or entity will use the equipment, tools, and/or supplies for the purposes authorized in the grant or contract for as long as needed, whether or not the project continues to be supported by SCC funds.

When no longer needed for the original project, the equipment, tools, and/or supplies may be used in other activities currently or previously supported by SCC.

These tools, equipment, and/or supplies are available for use in other projects if such use does not interfere with the work on the originally authorized project.

Preference for other uses will be given in the following order:

- Program areas funded by SCC.
- In grant or contract related work funded by another state or federal agency, or by the conservation district itself.
- Projects administered by other state and federal agencies.
- Other projects.

Disposition of property

Conservation district officials and municipal officers are prohibited by state law from benefiting from the disposal of public assets owned by the conservation district or entity. The board or other governing body may elect to delegate the task of declaring items surplus to an officer or agent who is not a member of the conservation district board of supervisors or other governing body. If such a

delegation is made, the prohibition of benefiting from the disposal of public assets is extended to the officer or agent.

If the asset proposed as surplus is evidence released by the court, seized assets or unclaimed property, the Board of Supervisors or other governing body must seek qualified legal counsel prior to declaring it surplus.

Disposition of tangible personal property

When replacing tangible personal property, the conservation district or entity may dispose of the property being replaced by using it as a trade-in or by selling it and using the proceeds to offset the cost of the replacement.

When the grant or contract expires, or when the property is no longer needed for the originally authorized purpose (whichever comes first), consider any property purchased with grant or contract funds according to the following scenarios:

- If the property is necessary for the continued operation of the project, or other similar activities administered through SCC or by the conservation district or entity. SCC staff may instruct the conservation district or entity to retain the property with no further compensation to SCC.
- Conditions for the continued use of the property may be attached at the discretion of SCC.
- If the project has no further significant use for the property and the property had an acquisition cost of \$1,000 or less per unit (i.e., tools). It may be retained, sold, or otherwise disposed of, and have no further obligation to SCC.
- If the project has no further significant use for the property and the property had an acquisition cost of over \$1,000 per unit, SCC will instruct disposal of the property and either:
 - Pay SCC an amount equal to SCC's share of the current market value or other price agreed upon by SCC.
 - Sell the property and retain the proceeds from the sale for use in other activities administered through SCC,
- If the property has no further value, the district may utilize a recycling or surplus option such as the Department of Ecology's E-Cycle program or DES Surplus Disposal, or
- Transfer title to SCC, or to a third party named by SCC that is allowable under existing statutes.
- The following disposal procedures will apply:
 - The board of supervisors or other governing body will assign a value to the asset.
 - The board of supervisors or other governing body will declare the asset as surplus.

At the direction of SCC, the board or other governing body will authorize one of the methods of disposal described in the following subsections.

Disposal of Assets to the General Public

Primary methods of disposal to the general public are recognized as direct sale, sealed bid, trade-in or auction. Other methods of disposal to the general public must be clearly detailed in writing and must have the consent of the conservation district board of supervisors or other governing body.

When disposal is made to the general public through direct sale, sealed bid or auction, final determination of value will be the highest responsible bid or offer.

Disposal of Assets to Other Government Entities

The conservation district or entity may sell, transfer, exchange, lease or otherwise dispose of any assets to any municipality or any political subdivision (this includes other conservation districts), or the federal government, on such terms and conditions as may be mutually agreed upon.

This requires a written request to entity acquiring the asset and a determination that doing so is in the public interest. The written request from the recipient public agency will specify the asset and the compensation to be received by the conservation district or entity. Compensation may be less than the fair market value, and may take the form of monetary payment, services, materials, or other assets provided in exchange for the asset.

If the value of the asset is estimated to be more than \$50,000, provisions of [Section 39.33.020 RCW](#) will apply. This includes several requirements, including a public hearing and certain notice provisions.

For more information see the following resources:

- Conservation District Master Contract
- [MRSC Asset Management Policies](#)
- [MRSC on Sales of Property](#)

If you have any questions, please contact your [regional manager](#).

Prevailing Wage Requirements

If you use subcontractors on your project, specific wage rules may apply. For some federally funded projects, the Davis Bacon law applies when determining appropriate wages. For many state-funded projects, state prevailing wages apply. Please see the links below for more information:

- [SCC District Operations Brief on Prevailing Wage](#).
- [Davis Bacon information](#)
- [State prevailing wage information](#)

Competitive Bidding

Grant and contract recipients shall establish and follow written procurement procedures or follow current state procurement procedures. All procurement transactions shall be conducted in a manner to provide, to the maximum extent practical, open and free competition. Be aware of organizational conflicts of interest. Conservation districts or entities that develop or draft specifications, requirements,

statements of work, invitations for bids, or requests for proposals shall be excluded from competition for such procurements.

Conservation districts, [contact your regional manager](#) for more information regarding competitive bidding requirements or the [MRSC's Suggested Guidelines for Purchasing, Bidding and Contracting for Washington State Conservation Districts](#). Or, see the [MRSC website](#) to find more information.

Section 11: Glossary

Allowable Costs are those that meet all eligibility requirements established in the terms of the ~~grant~~ master contract, grant programmatic guidelines or the Grant and Contract Procedure Manual.

Addendum a written document detailing the scope of work to be accomplished with the grant award.
Adds new information or clauses to a signed master contract without altering the original terms.

~~-additions and supplements to the original terms of the grant or contract.~~

Advance Payment is a payment of up to 50% of the cost share or district implemented project award of the grant taken in a lump sum for the district to reimburse the participant for a project. An advance payment is intended to relieve "cash flow stress." Please see the Advance Payment section for a more detailed explanation of the criteria.

Amendment written document detailing the changes or revisions to the original terms of the grant, contract or addendum.

Authorized Signatory the person designated by the district or entity on the Authorized Signatory Form on file in the Commission. It is preferred the chair may sign the conservation district master contract. The chair may delegate other signature authority to another elected or appointed supervisor or to an employee of the district via the Authorized Signature Form.

Authorized Signatory of the Commission is the Executive Director or other staff as authorized on the Authorized Signature notification.

Budgeting, Accounting and Reporting System (BARS) Manual prescribes accounting and reporting for local governments in accordance with [RCW 43.09.200](#). Its purpose is to provide (1) uniform accounting and financial reporting to allow for meaningful use and comparison of financial data; (2) accounting and reporting instructions as a resource for local government managers; and (3) a consistent framework for financial reporting to intended users, including managers, governing bodies, granting and regulatory agencies, the state Legislature, and the general public. The manual is maintained by the State Auditor's Office with input from the [Local Government Advisory Committee](#).

Best management practice (BMP) is a technique designed to protect the air, water, soil, animals, plants, and humans. BMPs must meet NRCS standards, or alternative practice designs approved by a licensed professional engineer. NRCS Practice Standards and Specifications are contained in the USDA NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). SCC also maintains a list of approved practices eligible for cost share.

Close Out means all administrative matters relative to a grant or contract are reconciled in order to close the file.

Commission (SCC) means the Washington State Conservation Commission, any division, section, office, unit, or other entity of the Commission, or any of the officers or other officials lawfully representing the Commission.

Competitive Solicitation means a process by which an entity solicits bids or proposals from a sufficient number of bidders to assure adequate, fair, and open competition.

Composite Rate is the accepted method to recoup employee salary, and employer paid benefits. A composite rate includes the employer's share of social security or SEP, Medicare, health insurance premiums, employment security, labor and industries, retirement, leave hours, and any other employer-paid benefits. SCC provides a form to be used by conservation districts to establish hourly billing rates and is completed for each employee. Loaded composite rates and/or fees added onto a composite rate will not be accepted.

Conservation District Master Contract is the formal written contractual arrangement, signed by the district chair and the Commission, and includes the general terms and conditions.

Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS) is designed as a landowner management system with the purpose to track resource concerns, Best Management Practices (BMP) needing funding and BMPs that have been completed using SCC funding. A landowner may have multiple properties with many BMPs being implemented on any of them. The BMP's implemented are based on the resource concerns identified on the property then funded by the appropriate funding source.

Cooperator is an eligible participant that works with the SCC or conservation district to conserve natural resources. Cooperators can include farmers, ranchers, landowners, land managers, lessees, land trusts, and other partners."

~~individual or entity engaged by the conservation district or entity to plan and implement best management practices. The cooperator may not necessarily be the legal landowner of the property and must secure permission from the legal owner for conservation district or contract activities.~~

Costs include all charges made to the project.

Cost Share is funding used to reimburse participants for a percentage of the costs associated with the implementation of Best Management Practice(s) BMP(s). Examples of costs include, but are not limited to labor, materials, and permits. Grant programmatic guidelines or contract terms may apply to cost share.

Demonstration Project is a project that utilizes practices that are not commonly used in a specific region or type of operation/site and showcases the applicability of a technique/technology for natural resources conservation. The BMPs demonstrated must show local land-users how new technology or innovative methods can conserve natural resources. New and innovative practices include entirely new technologies that have not been utilized on a widespread basis, and those that have yet to be adopted in a regional or operational context. A demonstration project may pay up to 100% for such practices on private or public land, regardless of the district approved cost share rate, on a one-time basis. A demonstration project must be pre-approved by SCC and may only be allowable under certain grant programs.

Disbursement - Payment by cash, warrant, check, journal voucher, ACH, or any other technological payment method approved by OFM.

District is the conservation district named on the grant-master contract and any individual or official lawfully representing the district in carrying out the terms and conditions of the grant or contract.

District-Implemented Project (DIP) is a project where the district is the lead planner and implementer. 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. A district implemented project must not include cost-sharing, cash reimbursement, to a landowner(s) with NRI or other SCC funds. The district is assuming all responsibility for project planning and construction directly. Grant programmatic guidelines or contract terms may apply to district implemented projects.

Effective Date represents the earliest date allowable costs may be incurred. The Effective Date is indicated in the grant or contract.

Eligible Cost is a cost that meets all eligibility criteria established in the terms of the grant or contract. This includes any criteria related to the nature and the amount of the costs.

Envirothon Costs incurred by the district for coordinating or participating in regional Envirothon contests are a conditionally allowable grant expense.

Event Sponsorship is a partnership between two entities, in which the sponsor supports the event host in organizing the event or adding value to the event, either financially or via an exchange of products or services. Businesses provide financial support, resources, or services to help make your event a success, and in return, they receive promotional benefits and exposure to your event's audience. The value that sponsors receive could come in many forms, such as increased brand exposure, access to attendee data, speaking opportunities, or discounted event tickets.

Exception

Expenditures - Decreases in net current financial resources. Expenditures include disbursements and accruals of the current period. Expenditures do not include encumbrances.

Expenses - Decreases in net total assets. Expenses represent the cost of operation incurred during the current period regardless of the timing of the related disbursements.

Expiration Date is the last date costs may be incurred (accrued) and considered allowable. Any costs incurred after the expiration date are not allowable. The expiration date is indicated in the grant or contract.

Fiscal Year in Washington State, a 12-month period extending from July 1 of one calendar year to June 30 of the next calendar year.

Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) are uniform minimum standards for financial accounting and reporting. They govern the form and content of the financial statements of an entity. GAAP encompass the conventions, rules, and procedures necessary to define accepted accounting

practice at a particular time. They include not only broad guidelines of general application but also detailed practices and procedures.

General Terms and Conditions are those grant or contract provisions that apply to all activities carried out under all grant programs administered by SCC.

Goods are products, materials, supplies, or equipment provided by a contractor or vendor.

Governmental funds are used to account for most typical governmental functions focusing on the acquisition, use, and balances of a state's expendable financial resources and the related current liabilities. The accounting for governmental funds has a budget orientation using the current financial resources measurement focus and the modified accrual basis of accounting. There are five types of governmental funds: General, Special Revenue, Debt Service, Capital Projects, and Permanent Funds. Refer to general funds, special revenue funds, debt service funds, capital project funds, and permanent funds.

Grant is an award of financial assistance, including cooperative agreements, in the form of money, or property in lieu of money, to an eligible grantee. The term does not include technical assistance which provides services instead of money, or other forms of assistance such as revenue sharing, loans, loan guarantees, interest subsidies, insurance or direct appropriations. Also, the term does not include assistance, such as fellowship or other lump sum awards, which the grantee is not required to account for. Refer to capital grants and operating grants.

Grant or Contract Number is the official number assigned to the grant or contract by the Commission. The grant or contract number ~~should~~must be included on all project-related correspondence, payment requests, supporting documents and reports.

Interagency agreement is a written contract between one or more government agencies as defined in RCW 39.34, or between the district and one or more non-profit organizations, or any combination thereof, to perform all or part of the services under the grant or contract. An agreement commonly called a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or an Interlocal Agreement shall be considered an interagency agreement. All interagency agreements between government agencies must comply with RCW 39.34 Interlocal Cooperation Act.

Integral part of the meeting - An activity within a meeting that is essential to the completeness of the meeting.

Invention disclosure is a confidential document written by a scientist or engineer for use by a company's patent department, or by an external patent attorney, to determine whether patent protection should be sought for the described invention.

Invoice is a legal document that a seller issues to a buyer to request payment for goods or services. It's a detailed record of a transaction, including the products or services provided, the price, and the terms of payment. Invoices can also serve as legal records. Invoices must be in accordance with the requirements under SAAM. The following must be included on invoices in order to meet state requirements: Payee name and address, invoice number, invoice date, dates when services were provided, total amount of goods or services, and date payment made.

Landowner is the legal owner of the property that the conservation district or entity engages to plan and implement best management practices. The landowner may be referred to as the cooperator.

Light Refreshments include coffee and/or any non-alcoholic beverages (e.g., tea, soft drinks, juice or milk) and between meal snacks (e.g. doughnuts, sweet rolls, nuts, or fruit and cheese) at meetings, conferences, or project tours. Reimbursements for light refreshments must include a receipt for goods, a list of attendees, [pre-authorization form](#), and a copy of the meeting/event agenda. Without this documentation, reimbursement will not be provided. To meet the requirements for light refreshments, documentation must show how they are an integral part of the meeting. The district must have a policy in place to allow light refreshments. Pizza, sandwiches, etc., are not considered light refreshments. For complete information regarding light refreshments please visit the [SAAM Manual](#).

Loaded Composite Rate is an employee composite rate that adds to, or artificially inflates, actual or reasonably estimated costs or charges above and beyond the actual costs paid out to, or on behalf of, the employee for hours worked. Acceptable components of an employee's composite rate are: salary or wages, payroll taxes, unemployment insurance, employee benefits such as medical insurance, earned sick or vacation leave accrual, Social Security & Medicare withholding, and retirement benefits. Other costs such as equipment, supplies, training, or inflating the employee's salary or wages, are not acceptable on a composite rate for SCC funding sources.

Minor is any person 17 years of age or younger.

Open Contract is a legally binding agreement that can be used in many types of contracts, including employment, property, and financial agreements. Open contracts are characterized by the lack of a specific end date or terms, which allows for flexibility and ongoing work arrangement.

Overhead represents those costs that benefit more than one activity of the district and that cannot be directly assigned to a task of the project. Overhead Costs are not to exceed SCC established rate of 25% of salaries/benefits or direct costs incurred by the district plus other acceptable goods and services outlined in the Overhead section of this manual. Once an overhead rate is established, the percentage will be used throughout the entire life of the grant or contract.

Packing Slip is a document that lists the contents of a package being shipped. It's used to ensure that the correct items are delivered to the customer. This may not be used and an invoice or receipt for reimbursement on a grant or contract.

Participant is an individual or entity that is, by signing the Contract for Cost Share Funds, accepting the cost-share funding and committing to install the BMPs in the contract. A participant may be the owner of the land, a lessee or operator, or a cooperator of the district.

Per Diem Expenses are daily travel costs covering both lodging expenses and subsistence expenses while in travel status.

Personal Property is property of any kind. It may be tangible (having physical existence) or intangible (such as patents, inventions and copyrights.) Personal property does not include real property. See Real Property definition.

Personal Services are professional or technical services provided by a consultant. Generally, personal services are used to address a short-term need, resolve an unusual problem, expedite a special project, and/or bring specialized skills for which the district is not permanently staffed.

Prevailing Wage is defined as the hourly wage, usual benefits and overtime, paid in the largest city in each county, to the majority of workers, laborers, and mechanics. Prevailing wages are established by the Department of Labor and Industries for each trade and occupation employed in the performance of public work. They are established separately for each county, and are reflective of local wage conditions.

Prior Authorization is documentation from SCC authorizing the district to incur project costs, or take particular actions. This permission is subject to certain conditions stipulated in the Prior Authorization Letter. Prior authorization is made before the execution of the grant or contract.

Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) is owned, leased, or borrowed by a state driver for which the driver receives or is entitled to receive monetary reimbursement or per diem when the vehicle is used to conduct official state business. The state driver is responsible to maintain vehicle insurance on the POV in compliance with Washington mandatory liability insurance requirements as defined in RCW 46.29 and RCW 46.30.

Project Status Update: Projects are required to be started within 120 days or provide a reason(s) or justification for any delays. Program and/or Regional Managers will reach out for status checks of all projects throughout the grant cycle.

Purchase is the acquisition of goods or services, including the leasing or renting of facilities or goods.

Purchase Card is a charge card issued to a card custodian for the purpose of making authorized purchases on behalf of the agency.

Purchased Services are services that support the day-to-day operations of a district or entity. Purchased services usually involve completion of an assigned task rather than an entire project, and do not require independent decision-making and analysis.

Real Property is land, including crops and mineral rights, land improvements, structures, and accessories to them, excluding movable machinery and equipment.

Receipt is a written acknowledgment of having received, or taken into one's possession, a specified amount of money, goods, etc. All receipts must have an itemized list of what is included in the purchase as well as a date the transaction occurred. All receipts must be legible.

Reduction in Funds is when funding or authorization for the grant or contract is made unavailable and the grant or contract is subject to amendment or termination.

Request for Proposal (RFP) is a written solicitation document which identifies the agency's need or problem, and consultants are invited to submit proposals which outline their solution to the need or problem, their qualifications and experience to provide the services, and their costs or fees.

Request for Applications (RFA) is a type of solicitation notice in which an organization announces that grant funding is available. An RFA informs researchers and other organizations that they may present bids on how the funding could be used.

Sales Receipt is a document that records a completed sale between a buyer and a seller. It serves as proof of payment and verifies that the buyer received the goods or services they paid for. A sales receipt must list the date of the transaction.

Scope of Work includes a detailed description of the project, including intermediate outcomes, budget, and completion dates used to determine successful completion.

Services are labor, work, analysis, or similar activities provided by a contractor or vendor to accomplish a specific scope of work.

Speaker is a person who presents information, ideas, or stories to an audience at an event. These can be any event, such as conferences, seminars, workshops, or webinars. Speakers are often experts in their fields and may include professionals, academics, or motivational leaders. Moreover, their primary goal is to educate, inspire, or entertain the audience, making the content relatable and accessible.

State Administrative & Accounting Manual (SAAM) provides control and accountability over financial and administrative affairs of the state of Washington and assists agencies in gathering and maintaining information needed for the preparation of financial statements.

SCC Financial Staff is SCC designated staff that has primary responsibility for overseeing the performance of the master contract by the district and represents the Commission in matters concerning any grant or contract awarded by SCC.

Subcontractor is an entity or organization, whose employees are not in the employment of the district, which is performing all or part of the services under the grant or contract under a subcontract with the district or entity.

Subscriptions include subscriptions to newspapers, periodicals and databases, and/or services providing informational reports, for periods not in excess of three years.

Supplies are all tangible (having physical substance and intrinsic monetary value) personal property other than tools or equipment.

Supplemental Funding is additional funding that comes available for use in the project.

Termination is permanent withdrawal, before the expiration date, of the authority to obligate previously awarded project funds. It also means the voluntary relinquishment of that authority by the district.

Terms of the Contract defines all requirements of the contract, whether in the contract, statute, regulations, or in the Grant and Contract Procedure Manual.

Total Project Cost equals the sum of allowable direct and overhead costs of the project.

Voucher is a reimbursement payment request that is submitted monthly to SCC for each grant or contract a district or entity is awarded. The voucher must include all backup documents as outlined in this manual to document the monthly costs incurred against the grant or contract.

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Washington State Conservation Commission

June 18, 2025

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, Executive Director

FROM: Shana Joy, Deputy Director of Operations and Programs

SUBJECT: Professional Engineering Grants FY26 Funding Allocations

Action Item

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Informational Item

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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. Professional Engineering Grants Program (PEGP) Guidelines were adopted in July 2023 following collaborative discussions with a group of conservation district staff. At the time, the PEGP was funded at a level that made it possible to also support additional professional engineering staff that were not employed or housed by cooperating engineering area host districts. The appropriation level for the next two fiscal years, at least, does not allow for the SCC to fund the cooperating engineering areas at the level indicated by the program guidelines – a level of \$250,000 per engineering area. While there is now a conflict between language in the program guidelines and the appropriation that the SCC received for the 25-27 biennium, conservation districts need to know what the funding allocation will be for FY26 before July 1st so that they have clarity on how the SCC will support their professional engineering staff while a process is undertaken to update the PEGP guidelines. SCC staff are recommending Commissioners approve a proposed funding allocation method for FY26.

Requested Action (if action item):

Commissioners approve funding allocations of \$237,333 for each of the 9 cooperating engineering areas and direct staff to bring to Commissioners at the July meeting a proposed process to re-open and update the Professional Engineering Program Guidelines.

Staff Contact:

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

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). With the increased investment in conservation district engineering work by the legislature in the 2022 legislation session, program guidelines were built with conservation districts participating. Those guidelines were approved by Commissioners in July 2023 and are attached as reference.

Here is the pertinent language from the program guidelines pertaining to allocation of funds:

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.

Additional engineering funds may be requested either for a cooperating engineering area program or by individual conservation districts. 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.

Professional Engineering Appropriation Information

For the 23-25 biennium, professional engineering grants were funded at \$5,400,000 for the biennium. The ongoing funding level is reduced to \$4,271,000 this biennium (\$2,136,000 for FY26 and \$2,135,000 for FY27) from the general fund. Funding is further reduced in the 2027-2029 biennium to \$4,100,000 (\$2,050,000 per fiscal year).

It is clear that the SCC is not able to meet district needs at the current appropriation levels. Regional managers reached out to conservation districts to share information about our current budget situation, explore options, and assess potential impacts. A meeting was held by Zoom on May 8th with districts. In that discussion, two primary perspectives were shared by districts. These are not new conservation district perspectives. In summary, those two perspectives are:

- 1) The SCC should allocate the available funds equally among the 9 cooperating engineering areas to align with the historical structure and intent of the PEGP over the years which is to support cooperating groups of districts to build professional engineering teams to provide services.
- 2) The SCC should allocate the available funds equally among the 9 cooperating engineering areas at a reduced level to allow for funds to be made available to other districts for additional professional engineering staff.

The majority of comments were shared in favor of the first perspective above and it was also noted that there is just not enough funding to fully support a cooperating engineering area team at the previous \$250,000 funding level. The historical intent of SCC providing grant funds dedicated to professional engineering services was always to support groups of districts working together as cooperating engineering areas with the understanding that the funding support from the SCC may never fully meet the need but would serve as seed money that could be leveraged to help secure additional funds from other sources. This is important information to keep in mind. While districts may of course choose to hire any type of employee that they may need, access to the professional engineering grant funds should occur by working with the appropriate cooperating engineering area host district and governing committee. If all conservation districts hired professional engineering staff and the SCC attempted to support all of those professional engineering employees, the professional engineering grant funds would be too diluted to be meaningful seed funding.

SCC staff recommend that the Commissioners abide by the PEGP guidelines to the greatest extent possible and allocate the available appropriated funds of \$2,136,000 for FY26 equally among the current 9 cooperating engineering areas at a level of \$237,333 per area. Staff also recommend that the Commissioners direct staff to craft a process and timeline for updating the Professional Engineering Program Guidelines to address the funding allocation language that conflicts with current appropriation levels.

Professional Engineering Grants Programmatic Guidelines

May 2024

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.

- Additional engineering funds may be requested either for a cooperating engineering area program or by individual conservation districts.

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.

Specific Program Requirements

Professional Engineers

Districts may hire one or more licensed professional engineers to manage an engineering program. Program funding may be used to support the work of professional engineers and other staff working under the direction of a professional engineer to support program delivery. A professional engineer is defined by RCW 18.43.020(10)¹. Professional engineers and engineers in training (EIT) shall be licensed in the State of Washington. Districts are encouraged to build engineering capacity that includes EITs, surveyors, engineering techs and utilize other staff to support professional engineering staff in delivering engineering services. Districts may also contract out for professional engineering services to meet engineering needs as determined by participating districts.

Inter-Local Agreements (ILA)

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

Liability for Professional Engineers

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

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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

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.

PE Services are to be made available to new and current engineering areas through a full time equivalent PE or equivalent contracted engineering services.

Each CD can only be a part of one established engineering area. A minimum of 4-conservation districts is required for new engineering area. Current engineering areas with less than 4 districts would continue. For all other engineering areas, if the engineering area falls below 4 districts, the engineering area has a one year grace period to get back to 4 cooperating districts. If after one year this has not occurred, the Commission reserves the right to halt grant funds.

Section 1 - New Cooperating Engineering Area Development Timeline:

1. The board of supervisors of each district involved approves initiating a new engineering area via a motion.
2. At least 6-months before the end of a biennium, interested CDs agree and notify in writing SCC local regional manager the intent of starting a new engineering area.
 - a. Include board approval motions
 - b. Include PE name if known or applicable
 - c. Include new engineering area name
3. Local regional manager briefs regional manager team and SCC Leadership Team.
 - a. If necessary, Regional manager conducts follow up questions with new engineering area
4. New engineering area notifies the respective existing engineering committee or Board of Directors. Current host district PE provides written support.
5. By April 15 in odd years, submit to regional manager a workload analysis (see details in next section)
6. Regional Manager submits request and workload analysis to SCC Leadership Team to discuss at a Leadership Team Meeting.
 - a. Questions will be directed to the Regional Manager who will share those with the petitioning CDs for response. Responses due back within 10-business days
 - b. Follow ups will be directed to Leadership Team for final decision
 - c. See evaluation criteria in Section 3
7. If approved, new engineering area develops an inter-local agreement and host district develops and submits to SCC a PE Services Agreement.

Section 2 - Workload analysis:

A workload analysis is required for new engineering areas by April 15 in odd years. This is to include, but is not limited to providing the following information:

1. Name of new engineering area Professional Engineer if applicable
2. Name of new engineering area host district
3. Names of CDs involved in new engineering area
4. Board Approval dates for initiating new engineering area process
5. If follow up questions requested from SCC – please include responses
6. Summary of previous 12-months PE accomplished to include in table format of CDs in the new engineering area:
 - a. Name of project
 - b. Indicate whether the following apply:
 - i. Preliminary Design
 - ii. Permit Design
 - iii. Fully implemented – completed or expected implementation timeline
 - c. For each project, indicate what CD the work was supporting
 - d. Indicate for each project whether SCC PE funding supported
 - e. If SCC PE funding was not used on a project, what was the source of funding.
 - i. I.E. SCC project funding or non-SCC funding
7. 12-month look ahead of expected and planned PE work of the new engineering area.
 - a. Provide a summary of expected work associated timeline for each
 - b. Indicate for each project whether SCC PE funding is expected to be used
 - c. If not SCC PE funding, indicate the likely source of funding

Section 3 - Evaluation Criteria used by SCC Leadership Team

1. Support from the new engineering area district board of supervisors
2. Review and recognition of PE engineer workload
3. Are the new engineering area districts actively pursuing grant funding that requires engineering
4. Do the districts have a track record of success in implementing engineered projects
5. If applicable, does the potential new engineering area engineer work well with existing engineering area engineer.
6. Is there support from existing engineering area CDs not joining the new engineering area
7. Do the new engineering area districts share a common district boundary
8. Does the new engineering area host/PE have agreements with CDs outside of the existing engineering area boundary
9. Is the potential host district a district in good standing (CAPP)
10. Available PE funding at SCC?
11. Is there still a need for an engineer in the new engineering area or just use contracting process with other engineers.
12. If denied, communicate back to CDs the reasons or reason for denial and provide appeal process outlined in Grants Manual – Section 2: Appeals

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

June 18, 2025

TO: Conservation Commission Members

FROM: James Thompson, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Request for Board Approval: Attendance at NACD Summer Conservation Forum – July 25–29, 2025

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) has scheduled its 2025 Summer Conservation Forum from July 25–29 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This event offers a comprehensive agenda, including sessions on sustainable land management, conservation policy, and networking opportunities with conservation leaders nationwide.

Participation in this forum will provide valuable insights into emerging conservation strategies, facilitate collaboration with peers across the country, and enhance the SCC's capacity to implement effective conservation practices within our state.

Additional Information:

The event agenda is accessible here: [NACD Summer Conservation Forum Agenda](#).

Requested Action:

Approval for the State Conservation Commission (SCC) Executive Director and designated member(s) to attend the NACD Summer Conservation Forum, July 25-29, 2025.

Staff Contact: James Thompson, Executive Director jthompson@scc.wa.gov
Lori Gonzalez, Executive Assistant, lgonzalez@scc.wa.gov