



# Washington State Conservation Commission

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## Meeting Packet

*May 21, 2026*

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

*Zillah, Washington*

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### *Our Mission:*

*“To conserve natural resources on all lands in Washington State, through voluntary and incentive-based programs, in collaboration with conservation districts and other partners.”*

WSSC Business Meeting  
Zillah, Washington

Time

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

Meeting Accommodations

Persons with a disability needing an accommodation to participate in SCC public meetings should call Lori Gonzalez at 360-791-0226 or call 711 relay service. All accommodation requests should be received no later than May 12, 2026, to ensure preparations are appropriately made.

Online Meeting Coordinates

To participate online, please click on [this link](#) to register. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting virtually. You may use your computer audio, or dial into the meeting using the information provided after logging in. Guests will be muted by the host upon login to allow for full discussion by Commissioners. Chat will be allowed between host and guests.

Public Comment

Public comment will be allowed after each presentation prior to adopting an action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker. Once a public comment session is closed, no further discussion will be allowed from the public on that specific topic.

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

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
9:30 a.m.		<b>Call to order/Welcome/Introductions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioner Roll Call</li> <li>• Guest Introductions</li> <li>• Pledge of Allegiance</li> <li>• Additions/Corrections to agenda items</li> </ul>	Chair Kearney
9:50 a.m.		<b>Executive Director’s Report</b>	Director Thompson

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
10:05 a.m.	1.	<b>Consent Agenda</b> ( <i>Action items</i> )  Public comment will be allowed after each presentation prior to adopting action. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.	
		a) March 19, 2026, Draft Business Meeting Minutes b) Out of State Travel Approval for Executive Director and Commission Member(s) – Grand Rapids, MI	Chair Kearney Director Thompson
10:10 a.m.	1.	<b>Conservation District Operations</b> ( <i>Action items</i> )  Public comment will be allowed after each presentation prior to adopting action. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.	
		c) Conservation District Supervisor Full-term Appointments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ West Region</li> <li>➤ Central Region</li> <li>➤ East Region</li> </ul> d) Franklin Conservation District Annexation Request e) 2026 Elections Certifications	Comm. Blake Comm. Troutman Comm. Cochran Tami Stubbs Allisa Carlson
10:35 a.m.	1.	<b>Commission Operations</b> ( <i>Action item</i> )  Public comment will be allowed after each presentation prior to adopting action. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.	Bill Eller
		f) SCC Emergency and Continuity of Operations Plan Adoption	
10:55 a.m.		15-minute break	
11:10 a.m.	1.	<b>Policy, Budget and Finance</b> ( <i>Action items</i> )  Public comment will be allowed after each presentation prior to adopting action. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.	Sarah Groth
		g) Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget	
11:30 a.m.	2.	<b>Conservation District Operations</b> ( <i>Information Only</i> )  a) Conservation District Election Rule Changes Update b) Conservation Accountability and Performance Preliminary (CAPP) Report	Bill Eller Allisa Carlson

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
12:00 p.m.		<b>45 – Minute Lunch</b>	
12:45 p.m.	2.	<b>Conservation District Operations</b> <i>(Information Only)</i> c) Conservation District Operations and Regional Manager Report	Allisa Carlson
1:00 p.m.	2.	<b>Policy, Budget and Finance</b> <i>(Information Only)</i> d) 2027-2029 Decision Package Development	Kate Delavan
1:20 p.m.	2.	<b>Partner Updates</b> <i>(Information Only)</i> e) Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) f) Washington Association of District Employees (WADE) g) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) h) Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) i) Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)	Heather Wendt Sarah Moorehead/ Craig Nelson Roylene Comes at Night <i>Packet item only</i> <i>Packet item only</i>
1:45 p.m.		<b>Closing remarks - Adjourn</b>	Chair Kearney

**TAB 1**

### Regular Business Meeting ~

The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission/SCC) met virtually as well as in-person on Thursday, March 19, 2026, in Friday Harbor, Washington. Chair Cherie Kearney called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m.

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

### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

**Cherie Kearney**, Chair, Governor Appointee  
**Wade Troutman**, Vice-chair, Elected central region  
**Larry Cochran**, Elected east region  
**Amy McKay**, Washington Association of Conservation Districts (online)  
**Brook Beeler**, Department of Ecology  
**Dani Gelardi**, Department of Agriculture  
**Bill Blake**, Elected west region  
**Jim Kropf**, Washington State University (online)  
**Katie Rose Allen**, Department of Natural Resources (online)

### COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT

**James Thompson**, Executive Director  
**Alicia McClendon**, Administrative Assistant  
**Jean Fike**, Puget Sound Regional Manager  
**Jessica Wilson**, Chief Engagement Officer  
**Kate Delavan**, Deputy Director  
**Lori Gonzalez**, Executive Assistant  
**Sarah Groth**, Chief Financial Officer  
**Sarah Wilcox**, Strategic Initiatives Manager

Additional staff are listed in the attachments.

A quorum was present.

### PARTNERS REPRESENTED

**Angie Reseland**, Dept of Fish and Wildlife (online)  
**Roylene Comes at Night**, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
**Nick Vira**, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
**Craig Nelson**, WA Association of District Employees  
**Sarah Moorehead**, WA Association of District Employees  
**Tom Salzer**, WA Association of Conservation Districts (online)  
**Heather Wendt**, WA Association of Conservation Districts (online)  
**Ryan Baye**, WA Association of Conservation Districts

All other guests are listed in the following attachments:

**Attachment A** – online registration/attendance sheet

**Attachment B** – in-person sign-in sheet

# ACTION MINUTES TAKEN

The meeting was opened with Commissioner roll call taken by Lori Gonzalez. A quorum was present. Following roll call, introductions were made for guests attending both in person and online.

Chair Kearney asked for any additions or corrections to the agenda; none were offered.

## CONSENT AGENDA

### ***Draft January 15, 2026- Business Meeting Minutes***

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the draft January 15, 2026 Business Meeting Minutes.

Seconded by Commissioner Troutman. Motion passed.

### **Out of State Travel Requests**

Motion by Commissioner Troutman to approve the executive director and a commission member to travel to Washington D.C. for the NACD Legislative Fly-In, March 23-26, 2026, as well as the Puget Sound Day on the Hill events held April 13-17, 2026.

Seconded by Commissioner Blake. Motion passed.

## DISTRICT OPERATIONS

### ***Town of Metaline Falls Annexation Request into Pend Oreille Conservation District***

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the Petition for inclusion of additional territory within the Pend Oreille Conservation District, as requested by the Pend Oreille Conservation District and the Town of Metaline.

Seconded by Commissioner McKay. Motion passed.

## PROGRAMS

### ***Authorization of Agricultural Conservation Easement Sponsorship (ACES) Application for WWRP Grant Funds***

Motion by Commissioner McKay:

The Commission has determined that acquisition of agricultural conservation easements on the three properties is consistent with the mission, duties and purposes of SCC.

The Commission hereby authorizes the State Conservation Commission Executive Director to sign required documents to submit grant applications to the RCO WWRP Farmland Preservation Program for agricultural conservation easements on the three properties:

- Hinterlands Phase Two Agricultural Easement – Cascadia Conservation District
- Fairview Agricultural Easement – Kittitas County Conservation District
- Wilson Creek Agricultural Easement -- Kittitas County Conservation District

Seconded by Commissioner Gelardi. Motion passed.

## BUDGET

### *Preliminary Approval: 2027-2029 Decision Packages*

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the following decision package topics for further development by SCC staff for possible submittal in the 2027-2029 budget:

#### **Capital Budget Proposals**

- Farmland Protection and Land Access
- Irrigation Efficiencies Grant Program
- Natural Resource Investments
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- Riparian Grant Program
- Shellfish
- Voluntary Stewardship Program
- Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative

#### **Operating Budget Proposals**

- Conservation Technical Assistance
- Disaster Assistance Program
- Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency
- Science Hub”

Seconded by Commissioner Beeler.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 11:20 a.m. Chair Kearney announced that the Commission would recess into Executive Session pursuant to RCW 42.30.11 (1) (i) to discuss with legal counsel representing the agency. The Executive Session was scheduled to last 30 minutes until 11:50 a.m.

At 11:50 a.m. the Chair announced an extension of the Executive Session to 12:00 p.m.

At 12:00 p.m., the Executive Session concluded, and the Commission reconvened in open session.

## POLICY, BUDGET AND FINANCE

### *Proposed Rulemaking Related to Conservation District Elections*

Motion by Commissioner Beeler to authorize staff to follow the Office of Code Revisor’s (OCR’s) public comment process for rulemaking in lieu of SCC’s standard procedure of a 45-day public comment period.

Seconded by Commissioner Gelardi. Motion passed.

Motion by Commissioner Troutman to authorize staff to begin the rulemaking process amendments to WAC Chapter 135-110 following guidance to the SCC received from the Attorney General's Office related to the resolution of the 2024 Clallam CD election lawsuit.

Seconded by Commissioner Blake. Motion passed.

Chair Kearney adjourned the meeting at 1:03 p.m.

## Zoom Registration Report

March 19, 2026 SCC Business Meeting

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>
Angie	Reseland	Matt	Janz
Bill	Eller	Katie Rose	Allen
dean	hellie	Ashley	Wood
Paul	D'Agnolo	Jim	Kropf
Megan	Stewart	Dave	Hedrick
Jodi	Prout	Rosa	Mendez-Perez
Joy	GARITONE	Becca	Hebron
Josh	Giuntoli	Toyo	Garber
Sarah	Wilcox	Paige	DeChambeau
Karla	Heinitz	Amy	Martin
Jenny	Coe	Amy	McKay
Kris	Neely	Heather	Wendt
Brandy	Reed	Anna	Lael
Tami	Stubbs	Kate	Delavans
Alan	Chapman	Nick	Vira
Karen	Hills	Dean	Longrie
Hilary	Aten	Larry	Cochran
nicole	boyes		
Margaret	McKeown		
Sarah	Jones		
B'Elanna	Rhodehamel		
Kara	Kaelber		
Emmy	Engle (Okanogan CD)		
Nikki	Atkins		
Brad	Riehle		
Allisa	Carlson		
Mike	Poteet		



# Washington State Conservation Commission

Attachment B

## Please Sign In

Conservation Commission Business Meeting

Thursday, March 19, 2026

	NAME	ENTITY/DISTRICT
1.	Sarah Groan	SCC
2.	Alicia McClendon	SCC
3.	Lori Gonzalez	SCC
4.	David Rose	NRCS
5.	Bull Bah	SCC - western
6.	Kate Delavan	SCC
7.	Brook Peeler	Ecology
8.	Craig Nelson	Okanogan CD
9.	Jessica Wilson	SCC
10.	NICK VIRA	NRCS
11.	LARRY COCHRAN	WSCC
12.	Evan Bander	MCD
13.	Vicki Carter	Spokane CD
14.	Ryan Baye	WTCO
15.	Josh Larsen	Whitman CD

16. Zorch Oppenheimer Clark CD

17. Ryan Williams Coscodia CD

18. Roybre Comas AtNight NRCS WA

19. Jean Fike WSA

20. Jennifer Boie Palouse CD

21. Sarah Moosehead WADE/TCO

22. Wade Troutman sec

23. Cherie Kearney Chair

24. James Thompson sec

25. Dani Guelardi sec / Ag

26. Dani Madrone sec

27. Paul Andersson SJCO

28. Lynn Bahrych SJCO

29. Guest

30.

31.

32.

33.

34.

May 21, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members

FROM: James Thompson, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Out of State Travel Approval

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Action Item

Informational Item

Summary:

The SCC executive director as well as commissioners who are non-state agency representatives must request prior commission board approval to attend all out of state meetings and conferences.

Below for commissioner review and consideration to approve is a request for upcoming out-of-state travel.

1. **Event Name:** National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Summer Meeting  
[\(NACD Website\)](#)  
**Location:** Grand Rapids, MI  
**Dates:** July 17-22, 2026 (dates include travel days)

Requested Action:

Approval of the SCC executive director and a commission member to travel to Grand Rapids, MI. for the NACD Summer Meeting July 17-22, 2026.

Staff Contact:

James Thompson, Executive Director / [jthompson@scc.wa.gov](mailto:jthompson@scc.wa.gov)  
Lori Gonzalez, Executive Assistant / [lgonzalez@scc.wa.gov](mailto:lgonzalez@scc.wa.gov)

May 21, 2026

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members  
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

**FROM:** Alicia McClendon, Administrative Assistant

**SUBJECT:** Conservation District Appointed Supervisor Applications

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

#### Background and Summary:

In March 2017 a more robust process for vetting applications for the position of appointed supervisor was approved. This process is used for situations where there are multiple applicants for an appointed position as well as when there is one candidate that is new to serving as a supervisor. For situations where there is only the incumbent applying for re-appointment, the incumbent will remain in their position.

During the current appointment cycle, the State Conservation Commission (SCC) received a total of 34 appointed conservation district supervisor applications to fill full-term positions, including one mid-term position, across the state. All applications for the full-term appointments were due into the Commission by March 31, 2026.

Of the 34 applications that were received, staff identified 10 applications from six conservation districts needing a more comprehensive review. The review consists of interviewing individual candidates for situations where there is a competition for an appointed position as well as when there is one candidate that is new to serving as a supervisor. For situations where there is only the incumbent applying for re-appointment, the incumbent will remain in their position.

This year, 10 individual interviews were conducted with the area commission member, another available commission member, and one regional manager.

#### Requested Action:

The elected area commission members representing the west, central and east regions will make their recommendations to appoint individuals to the conservation district board of supervisors for SCC approval at the May 21, 2026 meeting.

**Note:** To protect the personal information on the applications received, applications are not included in the public meeting packet; only the names of the applicants are provided in the listings below. All members were sent full applications for review ahead of time.

May 2026 Appointment Applications – Western Region  
*Commissioner Blake*

<i>Conservation District</i>	<i>Incumbent</i>	<i>Name of Applicant(s)</i>	<i>Regional Manager</i>
Clark	Alice Lombard	1. Alice Lombard	Josh Giuntoli
Cowlitz	Lynn Simpson	1. Lynn Simpson	Josh Giuntoli
Grays Harbor	Richard Boyer	1. Richard Boyer 2. Tia Lutz 3. Jamie Judkins	Josh Giuntoli
Jefferson County	Alfred Latham	1. Alfred Latham	Josh Giuntoli
King	Burr Mosby	1. Burr Mosby	Josh Giuntoli
Kitsap	Robert Gilby	1. Robert Gilby	Josh Giuntoli
Lewis	Bruce McDonald	1. Bruce McDonald	Josh Giuntoli
Mason	Michael O'Day	1. Michael O'Day	Josh Giuntoli
Pacific	Frank Kaech	1. Frank Kaech	Josh Giuntoli
San Juan Islands	Lynn Bahrych	1. Lynn Bahrych	Allisa Carlson
Skagit	Margery Hite	1. Margery Hite	Josh Giuntoli
Wahkiakum	Tom Langston	1. Tom Langston	Josh Giuntoli
Whatcom	Suzanne Snyder	1. Suzanne Snyder 2. Kevin Knight	Allisa Carlson
Whidbey Island	Mark Sytsma	1. Jennifer Abermanis	Allisa Carlson

## May 2026 Appointment Applications – Central Region

### *Commissioner Troutman*

<u>Conservation District</u>	<u>Incumbent</u>	<u>Name of Applicant(s)</u>	<u>Regional Manager</u>
Adams	Michael Broeckel	1. Michael Broeckel	Josh Giuntoli
Benton	Bridget Gallant	1. Bridget Gallant	Tami Stubbs
Columbia Basin	Dan Roseburg	1. Dan Roseburg	Allisa Carlson
Eastern Klickitat	Karen Van de Graaf-Erickson	1. Karen Van de Graaf-Erickson	Allisa Carlson
Kittitas County	Brian Cortese	1. Brian Cortese	Allisa Carlson
North Yakima	Cindy Reed	1. Cindy Reed	Allisa Carlson
Okanogan	Jerry Asmussen	1. Jerry Asmussen	Allisa Carlson
South Yakima	Dirk Van Slageren	1. Dirk Van Slageren	Allisa Carlson
Underwood	Valerie Hoy	1. Valerie Hoy	Allisa Carlson

## May 2026 Appointment Applications – Eastern Region

### *Commissioner Cochran*

<u>Conservation District</u>	<u>Incumbent</u>	<u>Name of Applicant(s)</u>	<u>Regional Manager</u>
Asotin County	Jerry Hendrickson	1. Richard Witters	Tami Stubbs
Columbia ( <i>mid-term</i> )	Vacant	1. Justin Gagnon	Tami Stubbs
Ferry	Joann Marshall	1. Joann Marshall	Tami Stubbs
Pend Oreille	John Floyd	1. Stephen Schmid	Tami Stubbs
Pine Creek	Mitchell Jamison	1. Mitchell Jamison	Tami Stubbs
Rock Lake	Stuart Elliott	1. Stuart Elliott	Tami Stubbs
Spokane	Tom Miller	1. Tom Miller 2. Kris Neely	Josh Giuntoli

May 21, 2026

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members  
James Thompson, Executive Director

**FROM:** Allisa Carlson, Central Regional Manager  
Tami Stubbs, SE Regional Manager

**SUBJECT:** Petition for Inclusion of the City of Pasco into the Franklin Conservation District

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Action Item

Informational Item

Summary:

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

Requested Action:

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

Staff Contact:

Allisa Carlson, [acarlson@scc.wa.gov](mailto:acarlson@scc.wa.gov), 360.480.6686

Tami Stubbs, [tstubbs@scc.wa.gov](mailto:tstubbs@scc.wa.gov), 564.250.0980

Washington State Conservation Commission  
Olympia, Washington 98504

PETITION FOR INCLUSION OF ADDITIONAL TERRITORY  
WITHIN THE  
FRANKLIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT

TO: The Washington State Conservation Commission

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

First: That heretofore the Franklin Conservation District was duly organized as a governmental subdivision of this state, and a public body corporate and politic.

Second: That there is need, in the interest of the public health, safety, and welfare, for the inclusion of the territory hereinafter described within the said Franklin Conservation District.

Third: That the territory proposed for inclusion within the said district includes substantially the following:

Incorporated City of Pasco, Washington

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

Franklin Conservation District

Signed by:  
*Josh Jungers*  
672502DF492C46C...  
Chair

Signed by:  
*Jacob Heinzen*  
800D039E58FB413...  
Vice Chair

DocuSigned by:  
*Brian Cochran*  
CA2749C529794FA...  
Member

DocuSigned by:  
*Dick Bengen*  
88FF12C8F66349D...  
Member

DocuSigned by:  
*Scott Mose*  
8879E50B756C4EA...  
Member

City of Pasco

Signed by:  
*Charles Grimm*  
88EE58F097DD4AD...  
Mayor

Date

4/1/2026

May 21, 2026

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members  
**FROM:** James Thompson, Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** 2026 Conservation District Elections

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Action Item

Informational Item

### Summary:

Conservation districts hold annual elections for three of their five board supervisors; the remaining two board supervisors are appointed by the State Conservation Commission (SCC). SCC staff canvass these elections and review all materials to check for significant noncompliance with election rules and procedures.

Staff reviewed the 2026 election results and found no known significant noncompliance. One conservation district received an elections complaint. I ask the Commission to adopt the staff canvassing and to certify and announce the official winners for 44 districts.

### Staff Contact:

Allisa Carlson, Central Regional Manager, [acarlson@scc.wa.gov](mailto:acarlson@scc.wa.gov), (360) 480-6686

### Background and Discussion:

RCW 89.08.070(6) authorizes the State Conservation Commission to hire staff to carry out its duties, including setting election procedures, canvassing returns, and announcing official results. Staff canvassed the 2026 election results and found that 44 districts followed WAC 135-110 and the published election procedures.

### Election issues

SCC received one complaint about the Clallam Conservation District election. SCC will investigate this complaint separately and is not recommending action on the Clallam Conservation District election at this time.

### Details of the 2025-2026 conservation district election cycle

- **July–August 2025:** Regional Managers reviewed and updated all SCC and district election forms for the new cycle and posted updated forms on SCC’s website.
- **September 25, 2025:** Regional Managers held the annual election training webinar to explain election rules, procedures, forms, manuals, and timelines.
- **September 2025–March 2026:** Regional Managers provided ongoing outreach to districts about requirements, deadlines, and procedures.
  - Regional Managers observed one in-person election: Clallam.

**District election summary**

After canvassing the results, staff confirmed that 44 conservation districts had no known issues of significant noncompliance with WAC 135-110 or the election procedures for this cycle and one conservation district received an elections complaint.

**Recommended Action and Options**

SCC staff reviewed all required election forms (Election Form #1 and Election Form #2) from each district. I recommend that the Commission adopt the staff canvassing and certify and announce the official winners of 44 elections listed below in the “2026 Conservation District Election Results.”

**2026 Conservation District Election Results**

- Adams – Curtis R. Henning
- Asotin County – Jesse C. Greene
- Benton – Michael Sackschewsky
- Cascadia – Junell Wentz
- Central Klickitat – Miland Walling
- Clark – Linda Lorraine Schmitz
- Columbia – Rory Francis Donohue
- Columbia Basin – John Preston
- Cowlitz – Joe Shulke
- Eastern Klickitat – Jason Blain
- Ferry – Eric Bracken
- Foster Creek – Douglas Poole
- Franklin – Nathan D. Bengen
- Grays Harbor – Heather Ryvove Smith
- Jefferson County – Julie Marie Boggs
- King – Csenka Favorini-Csorba
- Kitsap – Justin Domingus
- Kittitas County – Matt Eslinger
- Lewis – Tracy Spencer
- Lincoln County – Ryan Nelson Wiater
- Mason – Larry Boltz
- North Yakima – William Frank Hendrix
- Okanogan – Michelle J. Martin
- Pacific – Jim Olsen
- Palouse – Larry Cochran
- Pend Oreille – George Stuvenga
- Pierce – Mindy Roberts

Pine Creek – Tyson L. Carter  
Pomeroy – Luke Ledgerwood  
Rock Lake – Doug W. Schuster  
San Juan Islands – Andrew Pownall Jones  
Skagit – Jedidah Holmes  
Snohomish – Spencer Fuentes  
South Douglas – Michael S. Lesky  
South Yakima – Kristyn Mensonides-Cruz  
Spokane – Sara Schlake  
Stevens County – Andy A. Kroiss  
Thurston – David J. Lyall  
Underwood – Elizabeth Bella  
Wahkiakum – Brad Bortner  
Walla Walla County – Jesse McCaw  
Whatcom – Jim Shaver  
Whidbey Island – Teri Jo Summer Reiger  
Whitman – Amy McKay

## Suggested Motion

*Motion by Commissioner \_\_\_:*

“As per RCW 89.08.190 and WAC 135-110-760, and after reviewing the staff memo dated May 8, 2026, I move that the Commission adopt the staff canvassing of the election returns and certify and announce the results of 44 conservation district elections listed in the ‘2026 Conservation District Election Results’ as the official winners.”

May 21, 2026

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members  
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

**FROM:** Bill Eller, Special Projects Coordinator, S.A.L.

**SUBJECT:** SCC Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and Continuity of Operations Plan 2026 update

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

#### Background Summary:

As a state agency, the Conservation Commission (Commission) is required to have a comprehensive emergency management plan (CEMP) and continuity of government plan (COOP).<sup>1</sup> The CEMP/COOP attached to this memo accomplishes both objectives in one document.

Recent updates include adding new staff and adjusting responsibilities based on staff serving in new roles.

#### Requested Action:

Approve the adoption of the annually updated 2026 CEMP/COOP.

#### Suggested Motion:

Move to approve the adoption of the annually updated 2026 CEMP/COOP.

#### Future Revisions:

Commission staff continue to review and update the SCC's CEMP/COOP so that it more closely aligns with the standards and requirements of the [Washington State Emergency Management Division](#) and ensure it fully reflects the current scope of agency work. It is anticipated that a more in-depth review and update will involve a small group of SCC staff meeting over a number of months or years (subject to staff capacity). Periodic progress updates will be provided.

#### Staff Contact:

Bill Eller, Special Projects Coordinator, S.A.L., [beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov), 509-385-7512

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<sup>1</sup> See generally RCW 38.52.070 and WAC 118-30-60



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

Prepared by:

Bill Eller, Special Projects Coordinator, SAL  
Washington State Conservation Commission  
(509) 385-7512 – [beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov)

Approved and Reviewed Annually by:  
James Thompson, Executive Director

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

May 6, 2026

**TO:** All Staff

**FROM:** James Thompson, Executive Director, Conservation Commission

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

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

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

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

Attachments



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

WAC 118-30-060(2) Operational Component	Section Cross-Reference with WSCC CEMP
(a) Direction, control and coordination	1(A-D), 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
(b) Continuity of Government	1(C-D, F-G), 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
(c) Emergency resource management	4, 5, 6, 7
(d) Warning	5, 6
(e) Emergency public information	4, 5, 6
(f) Response and recovery operation reports	6, 7, 8
(g) Movement (evacuation)	5, 6
(h) Shelter	4, 5, 6
(i) Human resources (manpower)	4, 5, 6, 7
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# Section 1: Overview of Impacts, Risks, Recovery and Response

## A – Purpose of this plan

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

## B – Situations that may trigger this plan

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

## C – Organization of the agency

The Commission is a small state agency organized under Title 89.08 Revised Code of Washington. A governing board of ten members employs approximately 40 staff. Most employees are located in the agency headquarters in Lacey, Washington in the Department of Ecology facility. Several satellite offices are maintained where field staff operate remotely across the state.

The Commission is a service agency, providing technical and financial assistance to conservation districts. Of the agency's approximate biennial budget of \$160 million, a substantial portion of which goes directly to 45 conservation districts to support local conservation programs and practices.

## D – Critical business functions

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

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

## **E – Risks**

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

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

## **F – Recovery**

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

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

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

## **G – Recovery coordinators**

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

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

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

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

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

# Section 2: Business Impact Analysis

## A – Organization and law

The Washington State Conservation Commission (the Commission) is a small agency consisting of ten governing board members and approximately 40 employees. The Commission was formed in 1939 through Title 89 Revised Code of Washington.

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

## B – Service areas

### 1 – The Commission is a service agency

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

### 2 – Services provided

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

Technical assistance includes, but is not limited to:

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

Financial assistance includes, but is not limited to:

- Providing financial support for local programs through grants to qualifying conservation districts.
- Assistance with marketing and outreach materials during “Conservation Month”.

### **3 – Staffing**

Services are provided by approximately 40 employees in four general categories:

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **4 – Interdependence**

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

### **5 – Locations**

Administrative and fiscal services are centralized in the Commission's headquarters operation in the Department of Ecology building in Lacey, Washington. Project and field staff are located in the Commission headquarters and in field offices located across the state. After the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of Commission staff now work from home. Some, like administrative and financial staff, periodically staff headquarters on a rotating basis.

## **C – Operational and financial impacts of disaster or disruption**

### **1 – Budget**

The Commission had a total budget of about \$160 million 2025-2027 state biennium. Most of these funds were delivered by the Commission as grants to conservation districts for various local conservation programs and projects.

### **2 – Outage scenarios**

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

### **3 – Loss of headquarters**

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

### **4 – Loss of satellite operations**

The Commission's work environment is largely virtual. Impacts to staffing are not bound by geographic based disruptions.

### **5 – Loss of governing board**

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

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

## **D – Criticality of business functions**

### **1 – Categorization of disruptions**

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

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

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

## 2 – Certify elections and appoint supervisors

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

## 3 – Recommend funding and administer funds

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

Few conservation districts have sufficient cash reserves to continue operations for more than a few months if their cash flow is interrupted. If the Commission becomes unable to effectively administer grant contracts and associated funds, there would be an immediate impact on conservation districts. This impact would increase with time, quickly creating substantial cash-flow concerns in most conservation districts. Without the ability to continue the funding stream to conservation districts, the majority of conservation districts would lose most of their staff and the ability to provide technical and financial services to conserve natural resources would be severely impaired. It is important to note that conservation districts are the only non-regulatory local government entities authorized to work with landowners to implement conservation practices on private lands. Service to those citizens that directly control natural resources on private lands is critical to achieving maximum beneficial uses of water and other resources.

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

#### **4 – Review district operations and assist supervisors**

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

# Section 3: Risk, Threat, and Vulnerability Analysis

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

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



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

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

### **3 – Tornado or windstorm**

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

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

### **4 – Winter storm**

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

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

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

### **5 – Flooding**

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

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

### **6 – Landslide**

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

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

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

## 7 – Volcanic eruption, glacial outbursts, and lahars

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

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

### **Volcanoes**

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



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

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

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

### **Glacial outbursts**

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

### **Mudflows and lahars**

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

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

## **8 – Lightning**

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

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

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

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

## **9 – Smoke, dirt, or dust**

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

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

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

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

## **10 – Pandemic**

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

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

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

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

## **B – Accidents**

### **1 – Disclosure of confidential information**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **2 – Electrical disturbance or interruption**

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

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

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

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

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

## **3 – Spill of toxic chemical**

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

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

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

Several of our satellite offices could be impacted by a chemical spill, but none should cause disruption to Commission operations.

## **C – Environmental failure**

### **1 – Water damage**

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

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

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

### **2 – Structural failure**

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

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

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

Data should be backed up regularly and stored offsite to reduce business disruption in the event of a catastrophic failure of the Commission headquarters facility. Software licenses and proof of purchase should be photocopied or scanned and stored offsite. Backup copies of significant software should be stored offsite.

### **3 – Fire**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **4 – Hardware failure**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Commission staff should backup their documents and data regularly.

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

#### **5 – Liquid leakage**

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

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

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

## **6 – Operator or user error**

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

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

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

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

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

## **7 – Software error**

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

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

## **8 – Telecommunications interruption**

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

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

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

## **D – Intentional acts**

### **1 – Alteration of data**

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

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

### **2 – Alteration of software**

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

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

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

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

### **3 – Computer virus**

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

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

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

### **4 – Bomb threat**

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

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

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

## **5 – Disclosure of confidential information**

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

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

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

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

## **6 – Sabotage or terrorism**

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

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

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

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

## **7 – Internet attacks**

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

Commission operations in Lacey reside behind a robust firewall system managed by Ecology. The largest risk involves outside attackers flooding the Ecology network connection to deny

service to network computers. Ecology may utilize intelligent packet detection and filtering or operate honeypots to detect and automatically block such attempts, but these details are part of Ecology's confidential security program. The Commission does not know if Ecology monitors for intentional attacks initiated from inside the network.

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

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

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

# Section 4: Recovery Strategy

## A – Priorities during recovery

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

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

## B – Recovery requirements for critical business operations

### 1 – Certify elections and appoint supervisors

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

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

### 2 – Recommend funding and administer funds

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

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

### **3 – Review district operations and assist supervisors**

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

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

## **C – Provisions for offsite storage of critical data**

### **1 – Provisions for headquarters operations**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **2 – Provisions for satellite operations**

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

## **D – Alternative processing strategies and facilities**

### **1 – Command centers**

No command center is formally established in this document.

### **Agency recovery coordinators**

A primary and secondary recovery coordinator is established in this plan. The primary recovery coordinator will be the Executive Director of the WSCC. This position is currently held by James Thompson. If the primary coordinator cannot be contacted, the secondary recovery coordinator should be contacted. This position is currently held by Kate Delavan, Deputy Director. If neither of those individuals is available, any department head should be contacted.

Contact sequence	Name
First	James Thompson, Executive Director
Second	Kate Delavan, Deputy Director
Third	TBD Sarah Groth, Chief Financial Officer Bill Eller, Special Projects Coordinator, SAL

### **IT recovery coordinators**

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

### **Agency Recovery and Resumption Team**

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

- James Thompson, Executive Director
- Sarah Groth, Chief Financial Officer
- Kate Delavan, Deputy Director
- Bill Eller, Special Projects Coordinator, SAL

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

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

## **2 – Alternate business operations**

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

In a disaster, employees are to attempt to contact the primary recovery coordinator (James Thompson) first. If contact cannot be established, staff should contact the secondary recovery

coordinator (Kate Delavan, Deputy Director). If contact cannot be established, then attempts to notify any other senior staff members should be made.

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

### **3 – Alternate data processing**

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

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

### **4 – Alternate data communications**

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

# Section 5: Emergency Response and Problem Escalation

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

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

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

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

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

## A – Emergency response protocol

### 1 – Disaster events

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **2 – Problems**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **B – Problem escalation protocol**

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

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

## Section 6: Plan Activation

### A – First alert procedures

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

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

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

### B – Problem and disaster confirmation procedures

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

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

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

#### 1 – Human assets

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

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

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

#### 2 – Infrastructure

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

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

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

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

### **3 – Reporting problems or disasters to management**

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

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

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

### **4 – Emergency contacts**

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

### **5 – Command center activation**

Procedures for command center activation are described in Section 4.

### **6 – Recovery team notification**

Procedures for recovery team notification are contained in Section 5.

### **7 – Disaster declaration**

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

### **8 – Informing others**

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

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

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

# Section 7: Recovery Operations

## A – Recovery Flow

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

## B – Recovery team organization

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

It is the responsibility of the Department of Ecology’s IT Manager to implement a recovery plan for information technology resources. The alternate for this person is the Thomas Schienbein, Chief Information Officer.

### 1 – IT expertise

Thomas Schienbein, the Commission’s Chief Information Officer has technical expertise in computer and network systems. The agency has an interagency agreement through South Puget Sound Community College and the Department of Enterprise Services for emergency technical support.

### 2 – Programmatic expertise

The following employees have expertise in programmatic issues:

- James Thompson, Executive Director
- Sarah Groth, Chief Financial Officer
- Kate Delavan, Deputy Director
- Jon Culp, Manager, Water Resources

### 3 – Business services/support

The following employees have expertise in supporting business services:

- Sarah Groth, Chief Financial Officer
- Lori Gonzalez, Executive Assistant

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

## **C – Recovery team plans**

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

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

## **D – Primary site restoration or relocation**

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

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

## Section 8: Plan Validation/Testing

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

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

## Section 9: Training

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

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

## **Section 10: Plan Maintenance**

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

## **Section 11: Supporting Documentation**

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



May 21, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members

FROM: James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

SUBJECT: Funding Approval for Fiscal Year 2027

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

Summary:

Washington State Conservation Commission staff propose funding amounts and seek authorization to spend funds appropriated in the 25-27 biennial state budgets for fiscal year 2027.

Requested Action:

Staff request Commission approval of the funding proposals discussed below.

Staff Contact:

James Thompson, Executive Director

Background and Discussion:

Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) receives funding from several accounts within the state operating and capital budgets. The following outlines staff proposals for spending funds appropriated by the Legislature for the 25-27 biennium and supplemental 26 fiscal year broken out by budget and account for any changes since the last budget approval from the June 18, 2025, special meeting.

**General Fund State Operating Funding Allocation Proposals**

**1. SCC Operations :** SCC staff (“staff”) recommend continuing administration activities supported in the 2026 fiscal year with adjustments to reflect current appropriations and to align staff and operational capacity in areas identified by the Executive Director. Costs included in this category include but are not limited to funding for staff salaries and benefits; staff professional development; travel; IT; goods and services; rent; and grants and contracts (e.g. Center for Technical Development, Washington Association of District Employees, Envirothon, and Washington Association of Conservation Districts.) The funding available for these activities is \$3,516,915 for fiscal year 2027.

**2. Implementation Grant Program :** Staff recommend funding the Implementation Grant Program at \$5,702,085 per fiscal year. This program provides operating dollars to conservation districts for a variety of purposes including staffing, rent, programs, outreach, and goods and services. The Legislature appropriated \$1,900,000 per fiscal year for the 25-27 biennium specifically for Conservation Technical Assistance (“Implementation”). Staff recommend contributing the same amount of general-fund operating as the prior biennium of \$3,802,085 per fiscal year for Implementation in addition the amount appropriated by the Legislature specifically for CTA. Staff recommend Implementation is divided evenly across the 45 districts, with each district receiving \$126,713 per fiscal year, the same amount as fiscal year 2026.

**3. Engineering Allocation:** The Legislature appropriated \$2,135,000 for FY27 for the Professional Engineering Grant Program. The program guidelines direct SCC to first allocate \$250,000 per fiscal year to each of the 9 engineering areas. Any available additional engineering funds may then be requested either by a cooperating engineering area program or by individual conservation districts. However, the appropriation for this biennium is not sufficient to provide the minimum prescribed funding of \$250,000 per area. At the June 18, 2025 special meeting, Commissioners authorized splitting all available engineering funding evenly across the 9 areas. Staff recommend maintaining that structure for fiscal year 2027 and providing \$237,222.22 to each of the 9 engineering areas.

**4. Task Orders:** The operating budget provides funding for SCC to continue NRCS task orders at the same amount as fiscal year 2026 of up to \$125,000 per fiscal year. SCC staff are working with districts and NRCS to prepare task orders to allow districts to begin work July 1, 2026. Staff propose providing up to \$125,000 per fiscal year for NRCS task orders developed in consultation with NRCS.

**5. Sustainable Farms & Fields:** The operating budget provides \$660,000 per fiscal year for the Sustainable Farms and Fields grant program (SFF). Staff propose awarding up to \$660,000 in accordance with SFF programmatic guidelines. This is a reduction of \$750,000 from fiscal year 2026.

### **CCA Natural Climate Solutions Account Operating Funding Proposals**

**1. Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resiliency:** The 25-27 operating budget provided \$2,500,000 per biennium out of the natural climate solutions account for the Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resiliency program. At the May 2025 meeting staff proposed and the commission approved awarding up to \$2,500,000 for the biennium in accordance with the Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resiliency program guidelines.

In the 2026 supplemental budget SCC received an additional \$1,250,000 in forest health funding. SCC staff are proposing to use the new allocation of \$1,250,000 in accordance with existing forest health program guidelines.

#### **Recommended Action:**

Staff request approval of the funding proposals for the fiscal year 2027 included in this memo.

**TAB 2**

May 21, 2026

**TO:** James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

**FROM:** Bill Eller, Special Projects Coordinator

**SUBJECT:** Update on Rulemaking Related to Conservation District Elections - WAC Chapter 135-110

---

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

**Summary:**

SCC staff are making progress on the rulemaking authorized in March 2026 related to conservation district (CD) elections.

**Requested Action :**

None – information only.

**Background and Discussion:**

On March 19, 2026, the SCC commissioners authorized staff to begin the rulemaking process related to certain aspects of the CD election rules related to concerns identified during a December 12, 2025, a Thurston County Superior Court hearing.

Rulemaking requires specific steps for notification and public comment, as set out by the Officer of the Code Reviser (OCR). A rulemaking timeline is below. It is designed to make amendments to WAC Chapter 135-110 and have them adopted prior to the next CD election cycle. The rulemaking notification and public comment process sufficiently meets the requirements of SCC's policy on policies.

**Steps accomplished so far:**

- March 26, 2026:
  - CR 101 filed, rulemaking announcement in Washington State Register 26-08
- March-May 2026:
  - Rule language and other documents / information prepared

## Rulemaking Timeline

STAFF RESEARCH ON RULEMAKING AND DRAFT PROPOSED RULE	STAFF SEEKS SCC AUTHORITY FOR RULEMAKING	ANNOUNCE RULEMAKING (by filing CR-101, which must occur 30 days before CR-102)	FILE CR-102 DRAFT PROPOSE RULE CR-102 (includes proposed rule language)	PUBLIC HEARING	PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD	EVALUATE COMMENTS & RESPOND, PREPARE MEMO AND FINAL RULE	SCC ADOPTS, FILE RULE CR-103 (filed after Sep 17)
Jan – Feb	Mar 19 Business Meeting	Mar 26 , published Apr 15 in WSR 26-08	Publish Jun 3, published Comment period begins Jun 17	July 30, 2026 - 4 pm - Best Western Plus Lacey Inn and Suites, 8326 Quinault Dr NE, Lacey, WA 98516	Jun 17 – Jul 31	Aug 1 - 30	Sep 17 Business Meeting, WAC becomes effective 31 days after filing CR-103

### Next Steps:

- May 27, 2026:
  - CR 102 filed, proposed rule filed, posted on our web page and through social media
- June 17, 2026:
  - CR-102 with proposed rule published in WSR 26-12
- June 17 – July 31, 2026:
  - Public comment period
- July 30, 2026:
  - Public hearing in Olympia
- August 1-31, 2026:
  - Staff reviews comments, creates responsiveness document for SCC commissioners
  - Staff begins drafting amendments to CD election supporting materials
- Sept 17 commission meeting:
  - SCC adopts WAC changes and
  - Staff files CR-103 soon after Sept 17 – WAC amendments effective 31 days after CR-103 filed.
- Also Sept 17 commission meeting:
  - Directs SCC staff to put the draft supporting election materials out for public / CD comment.\*
  - \*SCC Policy #23-09 Procedure On Creating a New Policy
- CD election supporting materials will need to be updated to reflect the changes made in the WAC. Those materials include:
  - Conservation district election information (EF-1),
  - Election report (EF-2),
  - Election Checklist 2: Ballot Results,

- Poll List (PF-C), public election webpage,
  - CD elections administrator's webpage,
  - Election and Appointment Guide,
  - Election Calculator,
  - Issue Advisory IA 04-19 Campaign Disclosure
- Sept 18-Nov 6, 2026:
  - Public / CD comment period on election materials
- Nov 7–Nov 13:
  - Edits made to election materials
  - Responsiveness document created by SCC staff
- Dec 3:
  - SCC adopts edits to election materials

Staff Contact:

Bill Eller, Special Projects Coordinator, 509.385.7512, [beller@scc.wa.gov](mailto:beller@scc.wa.gov).

May 21, 2026

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members  
James Thompson, Executive Director

**FROM:** Allisa Carlson, Central Regional Manager

**SUBJECT:** 2026 Conservation Accountability and Performance Program Preliminary Report

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

### Summary:

Commissioners, at the January 2023 meeting, approved the Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (CAPP) Guidelines. The 15 Accountability Requirements (Standard 1) are based in law (RCW) and administrative code (WAC) for conservation districts. Completing or meeting 100% of these items is a threshold for receiving state funding through the Conservation Commission. This initial annual status report is submitted to Commissioners for their information at this time. A final CAPP status report will be provided in July 2026.

### Staff Contact:

Allisa Carlson | [acarlson@scc.wa.gov](mailto:acarlson@scc.wa.gov) | 360-480-6686

### Background and Discussion:

#### *Conservation Accountability and Performance Program Initial Conservation District Statuses:*

44 conservation districts are currently meeting the Accountability Standard 1 elements that can be evaluated at this time. For reference the CAPP Guidelines including the Accountability Standard 1 elements are attached. These are status remarks around the accountability elements that Regional Managers are tracking:

Item 2. 15 conservation districts completed their long-range plans within fiscal year 2026: Adams, Cascadia, Columbia, Columbia Basin, Cowlitz, Franklin, Lewis, Palouse, Pine Creek, Pomeroy, Rock Lake, Stevens County, Thurston, Wahkiakum, Walla Walla County, and Whitman.

Item 3. The current deadline for submitting annual work plans is May 30th. Regional Managers are actively assisting districts with annual planning and tracking submittals of plans.

Item 6. 44 conservation districts are known to have met the requirements to conduct supervisor elections and appointments according to established requirements. One conservation district election, Clallam Conservation District, is under investigation because of a feedback form received. The Clallam Conservation District election investigation is ongoing at the time of writing.

Item 11. The annual financial reporting to the State Auditor's Office (SAO) is due May 30th by statute. Regional Managers are actively tracking the status of district reporting with the SAO.

#### Next Steps:

A final CAPP report will be presented to the Commissioners at the July 16th meeting.

# Conservation Accountability & Performance Program

January 2023

Administrative Requirements and Performance Measures for the Responsible Operation of a Washington State Conservation District.

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## Description

The Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (CAPP) is a combined mandatory and voluntary accountability and performance program for Washington conservation districts.

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## Authority

RCW 89.08.070 authorizes and directs the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) to assist and guide local conservation districts across the state in the implementation of natural resource conservation programs. To accomplish this, the Commission has established guidelines and controls to govern the conservation districts' use of state funds, property, and services.

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## Purpose & Background

The purpose is to improve the accountability and performance of each of the 45 conservation districts in the State of Washington. The basic philosophy is to always be looking for ways to improve programs and services, increase efficiency, and offer support to willing landowners and others.

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## Accountability Requirements

The accountability requirements checklist is comprised of statutorily required functions and activities that conservation districts must perform. Not meeting all legal accountability requirements may require the district board to meet with the Commission, the development of a performance improvement action plan, and follow-up assistance from Commission staff. Noncompliance may affect Commission funding eligibility.

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## Performance Standards

Standards are for districts' use to evaluate how well they are doing by assessing themselves against a specified list of voluntary performance standards. The Commission's goal is to help each district reach the highest possible level of performance. The focus is on interactive visits and learning experiences to help each participating district determine where it can improve its operation to get closer to where it wants to be as a highly functional organization. The Performance Standards checklist (2 through 8) is voluntary and for district internal use.

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## Commission Assistance

The Commission members and staff will assist and guide local conservation districts by:

- Providing transparent accountability requirements and performance standards;
  - Providing on-going feedback to improve district performance;
  - Providing assistance to enhance public confidence in conservation districts' abilities to provide effective and efficient delivery of programs and services;
  - Ensuring that assistance is available to help districts achieve annual and long-range goals in an effective, efficient, economic, and ethical manner;
  - Providing assistance for district oversight of responsible management and stewardship of public funds;
  - Providing assistance and training to ensure that conservation district elections are open to public, as well as conducted according to the RCW and WAC.
  - Center for Technical Development (CTD) to help build technical capacity;
  - Assisting districts with engaging the public in identifying and measuring desired outcomes; and
  - Allocating resources to districts in accordance with demonstrated conservation district needs and available funding.
- 

### Process Timeline:

**January – March** - The CAPP Accountability and Performance standards are sent to districts in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter to be utilized in an optional self-evaluation early in the calendar year. The accountability section (Standard 1) of the checklist is required, and the performance section (Standards 2-8) is voluntary. Districts are encouraged to develop an action plan to follow-up on any capacity building activities that are identified.

**April – June** - An interim report of CAPP status will be prepared by staff for the May Commission meeting. Regional managers and other Commission staff, as needed, will continue work with districts on accountability and performance elements needing attention or improvement.

**July** - Annual CAPP report is prepared for the July Commission meeting. Commission members review the report and act on recommendations from Commission staff. The Commission may, at their discretion, reduce or withhold funding to a district not in-compliance with all Standard 1 accountability requirements.

**August – December** - Commission regional managers, in consultation with applicable Commission staff, will continue working with districts to implement an action plan to address deficiencies under Standard 1 mandatory accountability requirements.

## STANDARD 1

# Compliance with Laws (required standard)

Conservation Districts must fulfill their legal requirements as Political Subdivisions of the State of Washington and comply with all laws and the Washington Administrative Code. This evaluation is based on the best available information at the time it is conducted. **Date Evaluation Conducted:**

	Compliance with Laws and Requirements	Citation (link to RCW or WAC)	Yes	No
1.	Annual report of accomplishments was submitted on time, in the prescribed format to the Commission.	<a href="#">RCW 89.08.070 (11)</a>		
2.	District Long Range Plan submitted on time & meeting RCW and Commission requirements.	<a href="#">RCW 89.08.220 (7)</a>		
3.	District Annual Work Plan submitted on time & meeting RCW and Commission requirements.	<a href="#">RCW 89.08.220 (7)</a>		
4.	The District has made a demonstrated effort to address their top resource needs identified in their Long Range Plan.	<a href="#">RCW 89.08.220 (7)</a>		
5.	Upon request, District contracts and agreements have been submitted to the Commission	<a href="#">RCW 89.08.210</a>		
6.	Supervisor elections & appointments are conducted according to RCW and WAC requirements. At least one District representative (ideally Elections Supervisor) has completed mandatory Elections Training provided by the Commission.	<a href="#">RCW 89.08.190</a> & <a href="#">89.08.200</a> <a href="#">WAC 135-110</a>		
7.	Annual financial reporting to State Auditor's Office completed correctly and on time.	<a href="#">RCW 89.08.210</a>		
8.	All State Auditor identified issues (during SAO audits) have been resolved to the extent possible.	<a href="#">RCW 89.08.070 (12)</a>		
9.	Open Public Meetings Act is followed including executive sessions.	<a href="#">RCW 42.30</a>		
10.	State Public Records Act is followed.	<a href="#">RCW 42.56</a>		
11.	All Board Supervisors and Public Records Officers are current on the required Open Public Meetings and Public Records Act Training.	<a href="#">RCW 42.30.210</a> & <a href="#">RCW 42.56.150</a>		
12.	Keeping public informed of Conservation District activities.	<a href="#">RCW 89.08.220 (13)</a>		
13.	State Ethics laws for public officials are being followed.	<a href="#">RCW 42.20</a> & <a href="#">42.23</a>		
14.	District in compliance with terms of Commission/District Master Agreement.	<a href="#">RCW 89.08.070 (5)</a>		
15.	Demonstrated diligence in complying with state and federal statutes such as: contracting, employment/labor laws, etc., through adoption of up-to-date policies, training, and use of available resources such as MRSC and Enduris.	Various		

### Standard 1 Ideas for Improvement:

## STANDARD 2

# Natural Resource Conservation

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Conservation districts address natural resource concerns with landowners and land managers using incentive-based technical, financial, and educational assistance at the request of the landowner or manager.

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### Best Practices

#### **A. Prioritizing Resource Concerns**

Prioritizes which natural resource concerns to engage in based on community input and support, resource data, importance at state and regional levels, relevance, other groups working on the issue, magnitude of the issue, research conducted on issue, and appropriate role for the district.

#### **B. Addressing Known Resource Concerns with Landowners**

District actively provides contact and assistance to landowners (may not yet be a customer or cooperator) with known, high priority resource issues or in geographic areas of significant resource concern.

#### **C. Services for Customers/Cooperators**

District builds services and programs based on the needs of customers/cooperators for their conservation work along with the natural resource needs of the region. District actively engages customers/cooperators for their input on services and programs needed.

#### **D. Quantifies Impact**

District quantifies, in some method, its impact on the local natural resources by obtaining and/or maintaining quantifiable data on local impacts, maintains quantifiable cumulative impacts of district programs/work, and reports cumulative impacts to funders and other partners.

#### **E. Technical Capacity**

District has documented access to technical capacity to provide timely and efficient planning and implementation assistance for land owners to maintain conservation on the ground with reliable and consistent quality. For example, has certified technical employees, has access to at least one conservation planner, and participates in CTD data collection and certification programs.

#### **F. Research & Technology Integrated**

District integrates research and science into program development and implementation including connection with academic professionals; district offers to assist in advancing scientific research on emerging issues.

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### **Standard 2 Ideas for Improvement**

## STANDARD 3

# Board Governance & Policies

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Conservation district boards govern and conduct the affairs of the organization to provide conservation services and programs for land owners within their district.

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### Best Practices

#### **A. Board Roles & Responsibilities**

Individual board members are informed of and understand their role and their responsibilities as local government board members and as representatives of a division of local government of Washington State, including their legal and fiduciary duties.

#### **B. Board Governance & Leadership**

Board of supervisors actively governs the district by demonstrating leadership in conservation stewardship as well as instilling an ethic and culture of constant improvement. Board has a written policy / procedure for supervisors and associate supervisors. Board leads budget development, strategic planning & implementation. The board leads and directs outreach efforts to engage the public who live in the district to serve on the board and to build partnerships with the district on natural resource conservation efforts.

#### **C. Supervisor Participation, Vacancy Filling, Quorum**

District board holds board meetings attended by a quorum of supervisors who have chosen a chair, actively pursues filling vacant supervisor positions, promotes the development of future board supervisors through community engagement and outreach, and have meetings rescheduled or cancelled due to lack of a quorum.

#### **D. Board Effectiveness and Development**

District board collectively does a self-assessment of overall board effectiveness, membership, and actively seeks board and supervisor development activities. Works with the Commission to develop needed and/or new supervisor and board development activities.

#### **E. Effective Board Meetings**

Regularly held and effective board meetings with well thought out agendas, minutes, active participation by supervisors and public (if present). Regular meetings ideally are less than 3 hours except under special circumstances. Board meetings should be held at least monthly with time and location advertised in local media and other conspicuous public locations. Meeting materials are distributed several days in advance to contribute to an effective meeting. There is a time and opportunity for public input at each board meeting. Meetings are not cancelled, except in special/extreme circumstances due to a lack of quorum. Staff input is sought by the board as needed or directed by the board. Board meetings are conducted in

accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act and with respect, tact, and professionalism to all who attend.

#### **F. Legal Questions**

District always utilizes proper legal counsel for legal questions and/or needs (Enduris, WSCC, MRSC, and/or an attorney). The district has a policy for when legal counsel is to be used, how it is to be used, and how the board engages the services of legal counsel.

#### **G. District Operations Policies**

Current district operations policies are reviewed and updated annually. When operations policy issues arise, the district utilizes needed expertise to address those issues and craft policies as needed.

#### **Standard 3 Ideas for Improvement**

## **STANDARD 4**

# **Fiscal Oversight**

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Conservation district supervisors are ultimately responsible for the fiscal oversight for their conservation district and conducting the business affairs in a lawful, ethical and responsible manner.

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### Best Practices

#### **A. Leveraging Financial & Other Resources**

District is leveraging or can demonstrate it has tried to leverage all their funding with other resources from other districts and local, state, federal, non-governmental or private partners.

#### **B. Financial Reporting & Vouchering**

All financial reporting and vouchering to the WSCC and other funders is on time, complete, accurate, and complies with funders' financial policies and grants procedures.

#### **C. Use of Allocated Funding**

District has utilized WSCC and all allocated public funding in a timely manner or has notified the funder at least three months before the end of the fiscal year that funding allocations for that fiscal year cannot be utilized, allowing for funding to potentially be used by another district.

#### **D. Funding & Budgeting**

District has adopted & followed a budget that maintains cash reserves to meet financial commitments.

#### **E. Internal Financial Controls**

District has excellent internal controls and policies that it follows to safeguard public funds. District has maintained clean internal and state audits for a minimum of two (2) audit cycles. District seeks out and utilizes good examples of effective internal controls and policies.

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#### **Standard 4 Ideas for Improvement**

### **STANDARD 5**

## **Human Resources**

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Conservation districts have skilled personnel to carry out their programs, whether volunteers, paid staff and/or consultants/contractors and have a governing board of five supervisors that actively govern the human resources policies of the district.

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#### Best Practices

##### **A. Delegated Authority**

Any delegation of responsibilities (authority) to a district manager, or equivalent is clearly set out in writing, is consistent with board approval requirements of the WSCC, and commensurate with the experience of the board and manager, within the scope of the job description of the manager and acknowledged by both the manager and board chair in writing.

##### **B. Training**

The district has an appropriate training policy and plan for all supervisors & staff. Staff and supervisors are actively participating in annual training opportunities (WACD, WADE, WSCC, Enduris, NRCS, etc.). The training policy includes actively pursuing opportunities for cross-training.

##### **C. Performance Evaluations**

Board members assure that performance evaluations are conducted for each staff member annually, and directly evaluate performance of the lead staff (manager, executive, director).

##### **D. Personnel Policies & Procedures**

Board members have developed and shared personnel policies and procedures with each employee.

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## Standard 5 Ideas for Improvement

### STANDARD 6

## Planning

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Conservation districts build their long range and annual plans to address high priority resource concerns using public and partner input.

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#### Best Practices

##### **A. Public & Stakeholders Input for Program & Plan Development**

Input is sought from public and stakeholders in program development, during annual and long-range plan development, public and stakeholder input is gathered, and solicited before annual work plan and long-range plan are approved by the board. At a minimum, one open public meeting in the community shall be held to seek input from the public and stakeholders.

##### **B. Annual Work Plan**

Annual Work Plan addresses the specific natural resource concerns in a prioritized manner as approved by the board of supervisors. The district board actively pursues implementation of activities to meet the goals of the annual plan.

##### **C. Regular Review and Use of Annual and Long-Range Plans**

Meeting agendas are built with reference to annual and long-range plan priorities and actions. Board members and staff regularly review and refer to annual and long-range plans.

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## Standard 6 Ideas for Improvement

### STANDARD 7

## Partnering

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Conservation districts partner with organizations and agencies in the delivery of conservation programs and projects.

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#### Best Practices

**A. Partnering with Public, Private, Tribal, and Nonprofit Partners**

Demonstrated ability to work and coordinate with current and potential partners to identify and target areas for natural resource conservation and improvement, projects, opportunities for sharing funding, and workforce resources.

**B. Partnering with Other Conservation Districts**

Demonstrated ability to work and coordinate with other conservation districts to identify and target areas for natural resource conservation and improvement, projects, opportunities for sharing funding, and workforce resources.

**C. Working Relationships with Elected Officials & Tribal Governments**

District supervisors and staff have regular contact including meetings and tours, with elected officials and staff in cities, counties, state legislature, tribal government, and congress to provide information on conservation projects and services.

**D. Participation in Affiliated Organizations**

District supervisors and staff actively participate in affiliated organizations’ events, committees, elected positions, and activities (e.g., WACD, WADE, WCS, and NACD), including payment of annual membership.

**E. Working Relationships with Conservation Commission**

District supervisors and staff provide open and constructive feedback to the WSCC, and actively bring up and work to resolve in a timely manner any issues.

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**Standard 7 Ideas for Improvement**

## STANDARD 8

# Public Outreach & Education

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Conservation districts provide conservation information and education to a wide variety of audiences.

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Best Practices

**A. Public Outreach**

District has a public outreach plan (in Annual and-or Long-Range Plan plan) including regularly publishing and distributing information regarding district activities, as demonstrated by: press releases, newsletters, social media presence, district tours of projects, and distribution of information to partners, diverse stakeholders, and funders.

**B. Youth Education**

District has a youth education program assisting school teachers and administrators, including classroom and field activities that have a clear connection with school programs, the education requirements of the school district, and its related natural resource educational impact.

**C. District Physical Location**

Has a physical location that provides regular, weekday office hours for public access, information, and services. Office hours are clearly posted at office location and on district website. District has signage visible from a public right of way adjacent to the district office.

**D. Annual Report of Accomplishments**

Annual report of accomplishments includes outstanding examples of conservation work completed, compared to what the district planned to do or needs to do.

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**Standard 8 Ideas for Improvement**

## **District Capacity Building Ideas, Actions & Record of Exceptional Activities**

**STANDARD 2 - Natural Resource Conservation**

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**STANDARD 3 - Board Governance & Policies**

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**STANDARD 4 - Fiscal Oversight**

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**STANDARD 5 - Human Resources**

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**STANDARD 6 - Planning**

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**STANDARD 7 - Partnering**

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**STANDARD 8 - Public Outreach & Education**

May 21, 2026

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members  
James Thompson, Executive Director

**FROM:** Allisa Carlson, Central Regional Manager

**SUBJECT:** District Operations and Regional Managers Report

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Action Item

Informational Item

### Report Summary:

Regional Managers (RMs) offer this report of recent activities and support provided to conservation districts in various district operations aspects, Commission operations assistance, and program administration support.

### *District Operations*

RMs continue to provide support to all 45 CDs. With recent staff departures on the RM team (Puget Sound & Northeast RMs) we are actively recruiting to fill these positions. In the interim, the Southwest, Central, and Southeast RMs are supporting the CDs in these areas.

### *Commission Operations & Program Administration*

The RM team has also been participating in the program demand process in support of Commission decision package development.

### *Partnerships & Partnering Assistance*

The Regional Manager team provides ongoing assistance with partnering or participated in partner and relationship building efforts with: individual conservation districts, WADE, PSCD Caucus, Center for Technical Development, WACD, DNR, Ecology, DFW, NACD, Washington Association of Land Trusts, State Auditor's Office, RCO, Department of Veterans Affairs, WA Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, Washington Conservation Society, and Integrated Pest Management Workgroup.

RMs will be facilitating Local Work Group meetings upon request by NRCS or the LWG Chair. These meetings occur through August. Discussions regarding Task Orders and agreements are

ongoing, including task order work for CDs to assist NRCS with critical activities related to Farm Bill programs and producer contracts.

### *Chehalis Basin*

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

Connected to ag viability in the Chehalis Basin, the Southwest Washington Growers Co-Op presented and introduced a cover cropping funding concept to support Basin farmers, keep economic benefits local, and support habitat restoration and flood damage reduction. The Board approved purchase of two large no-till drills; a seed cleaner; and cover crop seed.

The board is currently experiencing some changes in leadership. The Executive Director, Jeff Zenk took a new position, and the long time Chair, Vicki Raines, also moved from public service to a new position. Lewis County Commissioner Scott Brummer was selected by the board to serve as interim Chair. The enabling statute establishes that the Governor appoint the chair. That process is underway.

Grays Harbor CD was recently awarded \$683k to continue native tree & shrub establishment on 20 acres and invasive species management on 145 acres of the Satsop and Wynoochee Early Action Reach project sites.

SCC staff continue to coordinate with CDs and partners every other month. These are opportunities to share updates and information, identify possible issues, and generally stay connected.

### *Conservation District Elections and Appointments*

The RM team completed the 2026 Election cycle review and participated in the appointed supervisor interviews. We are looking forward to onboarding new supervisors in the coming months.

### *Programs*

RM's are currently in the lead role for the following programs.

- Implementation
- Shellfish
- Natural Resource Investments (NRI)
- Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resilience Initiative (WSRRI)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- NRCS Task Orders
- Professional Engineering

May 21, 2026

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members  
James Thompson, Executive Director

**FROM:** Kate Delavan, Deputy Director

**SUBJECT:** 2027-29 Decision Packages Update

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

### Summary:

At the March 2026 business meeting, Commissioners provided authorization of a preliminary slate of decision packages. This memo and the accompanying presentation seek to provide context and data-driven analysis for Commissioners on demand for SCC grant programs. Staff will seek final Commissioner authorization on decision package topics, including the not-to-exceed amount and package prioritization, at the July business meeting.

### Staff Contact:

Kate Delavan, Deputy Director, [kdelavan@scc.wa.gov](mailto:kdelavan@scc.wa.gov), 360-280-6486

### Background and Discussion:

Decision packages, also known as budget requests, are the formal process for an agency to communicate their budget needs to the Governor's Office and Legislature. SCC's decision packages are jointly developed with conservation districts to reflect the needs of our local conservation delivery system.

SCC expects decision packages will be due to the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management (OFM) mid-September 2026. Staff shared the timeline and activities for Commission, conservation districts, and staff engagement related to decision package development at the January business meeting. At the March business meeting, Commissioners provided preliminary authorization to move forward with the following decision packages:

### Capital Budget Proposals

- Farmland Protection and Land Access (FPLA)
- Irrigation Efficiencies Grant Program (IEGP)

- Natural Resource Investments (NRI)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- Riparian Grant Program (RGP)
- Shellfish
- Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)
- Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI)

### **Operating Budget Proposals**

- Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)
- Disaster Assistance Program (DAP)
- Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency (FHCWR)
- Science Hub

Staff and conservation districts discussed decision package development on several occasions including a February 9 hybrid meeting in Olympia and the March and May CD Roundtables. SCC distributed an online survey to conservation districts to understand demand for SCC programs in the 2027-29 biennium. Understanding program demand is necessary in crafting SCC's approach to decisions packages. Thirty-two conservation districts responded to the survey. SCC program leads also provided data on grant programs via an internal staff survey. Several themes stood out in both surveys:

#### *Demand for SCC programs is growing*

Both surveys show increasing demand across nearly all programs:

- Demand exceeds funding in nearly every program, in some cases by 5–10x.
- Districts report demand exceeding current budgets (e.g., NRI, RGP, CTA, IEGP, VSP).
- Program managers confirm rising needs, driven by climate pressures, landowner interest, and program maturity.
- Both surveys report program demand exceeds available funding.

#### *Technical assistance (TA) is a major statewide need*

- TA demand is universally high
- Districts frequently request TA beyond current allocations
- Program managers consistently note TA as underfunded (FHCWR, SFF, RPPP, NRI), especially for complex projects or early project development.

#### *Cultural resources (CR) costs are emerging across programs*

- Cultural resources costs are rising across programs.
- Districts cite rising CR costs as a barrier in Shellfish, RGP, NRI, VSP.
- Both surveys identify CR as an emerging cost driver requiring additional consideration.

#### *Climate related work is accelerating*

- Impacts of climate change (drought, wildfire, water scarcity) are driving increased demand across several programs.
- Districts highlight wildfire, drought, forest health, water scarcity, and shrinking groundwater supplies as major drivers of program demand (FHCWR, WSRRI, IEGP, NRI).
- Program managers confirm these climate impacts are shaping program pipelines. (IEGP, FHCWR, WSRRI).

#### *Flexibility is highly valued*

- Districts praise CTA and NRI for flexibility and speed.
- Program managers also identify NRI and CTA as essential flexible infrastructure.
- Both datasets describe flexible dollars as foundational to conservation delivery.

#### *CDs report unmet needs*

When asked about unmet needs, districts reported the following:

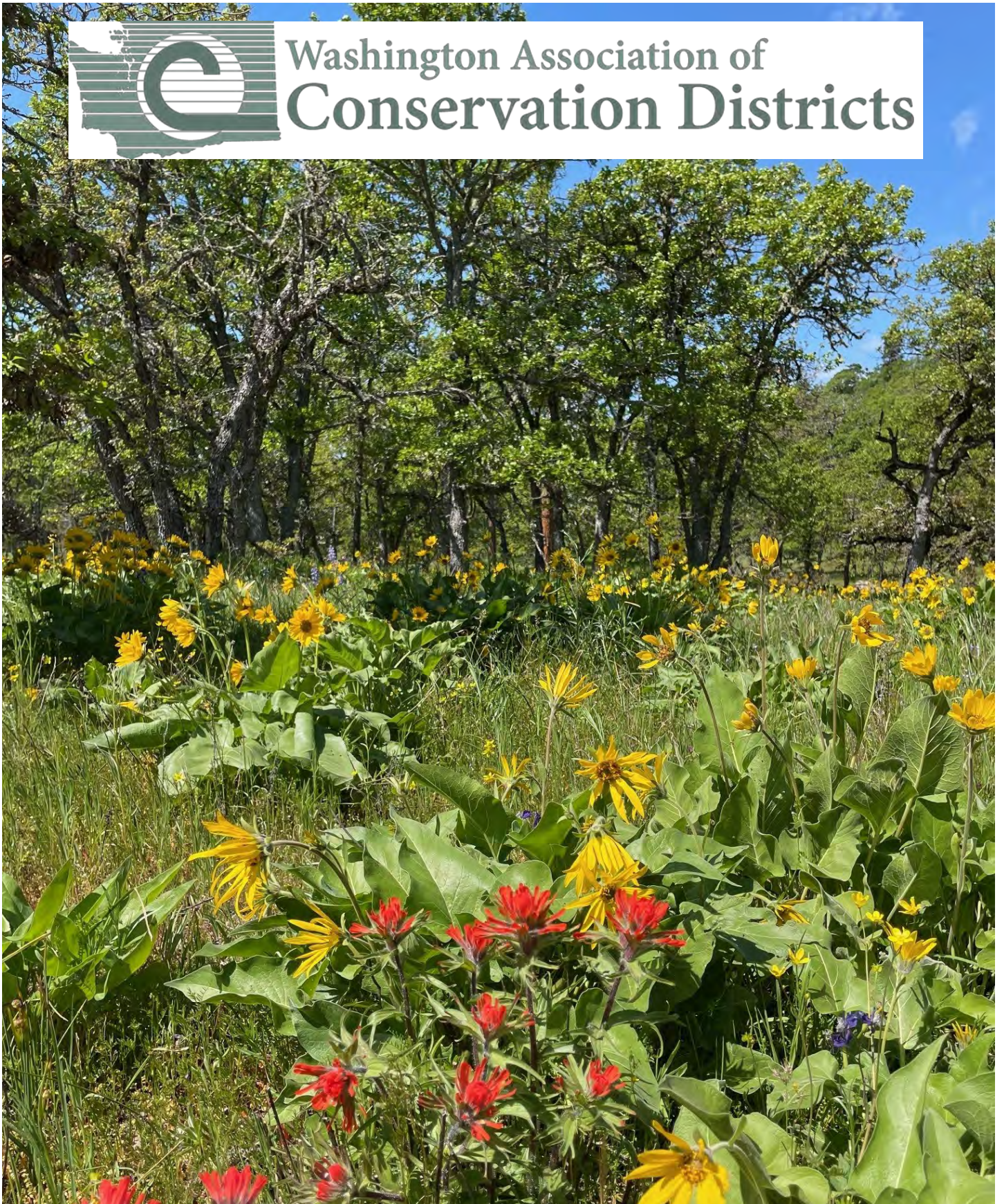
- Insufficient funding to sustain core operations and for technical assistance.
- High demand and long waitlists for cost-share programs.
- Challenges related to complex permitting, short funding cycles, and lack of support for education, outreach, monitoring, and administration requiring structural changes (e.g. increased CTA and multiyear funding).
- Capital needs such as vehicles, office space, and equipment.

#### *Next Steps:*

Staff will seek final Commissioner authorization on the 2027-29 decision packages, including the not-to-exceed amounts and prioritization, at the July business meeting.



# Washington Association of Conservation Districts



May 2026 Partner Report

# ADVOCACY

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WACD held its Spring Legislative Engagement Meeting on April 29<sup>th</sup> via Zoom. In addition to committee updates, the membership discussed WACD's proposed elections bill and areas where the community has consensus, and topic areas where we do not.

Consensus elements include:

- Elections every other year (not annually)
- 4-year supervisor terms (up from 3 years)
- Elections during Conservation Month
- Option to switch to Title 29A general ballot (with ability to switch back)
- No F-1 financial affairs statement requirement for all supervisors

Pinch points needing further discussion:

- We heard concerns from legislators about the landowner requirement for some supervisor positions.
- For CDs choosing to hold elections on the general ballot: the requirement of participating in the primary, and financial and campaign disclosure forms.

WACD will continue to survey CD boards on these topics. In addition, WACD will form a working group to discuss these and other issues ahead of dropping an elections bill so that the membership is aligned when these topics arise.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

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- May 18: [WACD Board Meeting](#)
- May 19 – 21: [SCC Meeting, Hosted by South Yakima CD](#)
- June 8 – 10: [WADE Conference](#)
- June 15: [WACD Board Meeting](#)
- July 15 – 16: [SCC Meeting, Hosted by Skagit CD](#)
- July 17 – 22: [NACD Summer Meeting](#)



# OPERATIONS

## EXECUTIVE OFFICE

- The WACD Board of Directors will hold a **Board Meeting** on June 15th. Information on the meeting can be found [here](#).
- In April, Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) launched two surveys—one for supervisors and another for CD Managers/Executive Directors—to gather insights on barriers to and opportunities for supervisor engagement. The results will inform WACD's engagement strategies moving forward.
- This spring and summer, WACD is hosting Power Lunch webinars with our partners. On **April 22<sup>nd</sup>** we heard from Okanogan CD and NRCS on the Earth Team Volunteer Program. On **May 6<sup>th</sup>** we heard from American Farmland Trust about their Land Transfer Support Program. On **July 9<sup>th</sup>** NRCS will share information about their Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP). You can register for this upcoming webinar [here](#).
- Save the Date – For our next Legislative Engagement Meeting, join us as we prepare for the next legislative session:
  - September 18<sup>th</sup> – Hybrid Meeting, White Salmon
- Did you know that the National Association of Conservation Districts will be holding its 2027 Summer Meeting/Joint Pacific Region Meeting in Spokane! This will be a great opportunity for WA State CDs and partners to engage with national leaders. Stay tuned for more info!

## PLANT MATERIALS CENTER

- PMC sales were down this year, but that appears to be the norm for nurseries across the region. Still, as of the end of April, the PMC had shipped an impressive 1,031,394 plants.
- Transplanting is complete. The crew planted a little over 2 acres of trees in a little over a week. 232,000 new trees are growing in the field. Some are contract-grown for CDs, small forest landowners, and the Whatcom Farm and Forestry Association, and the rest are grown for over-the-counter sales.
- We received 29 pounds of Western White Pine and 2.5 pounds of Western Hemlock seed. This is great timing because we were out of stock on pine seed. The value of pine seed alone is over \$17k, and this will supply the PMC for about five years.
- Upcoming Events: PMC staff are moving forward on multiple fronts. They will complete spring seeding, prepare fields for fall seeding, and plan the FY27 budget. 2-0 shrubs will be root pruned. Field inventory will begin, and employee reviews will be completed. The cooler will be shut down in early May.



Sunrise at the PMC – Photo By: Jim Brown

# WACD COMMITTEE UPDATES

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## WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

The Ways and Means Committee is recommending additional engagement opportunities for CDs around the resolution development process. The primary goal is to have vetted, well-rounded resolutions that are actionable on the part of WACD. Proposed updates to the resolution process and template can be found [here](#).

## SUSTAINABLE FUNDING COMMITTEE

The Sustainable Funding Committee (SFC) received excellent feedback at the 2025 WACD Annual Meeting. At their February 2026 meeting, the SFC adopted a multi-model approach. This model ensures that no single sector bears the burden of providing sustainable funding for Washington's 45 conservation districts. In order to move forward, the committee recommended the development of a scoping study to analyze different funding models. The WACD board approved a contract with Western Washington University's Center for Economic and Business Research to evaluate 5 funding models through rigorous fiscal analysis.

## AG VIABILITY WORKGROUP

In April, WACD's Ag Visibility Workgroup began meeting. This workgroup is tasked with defining ag viability for CD purposes and to develop or identify a simple, trackable metric that would rate the impact an SCC-funded project would have on agricultural viability.



**NRCS-WA**  
**Activity Report**  
May 2026



## Message from the State Conservationist

# CPS Roundtable Highlights the Power of Listening and Collaboration

By Roylene Comes At Night  
*State Conservationist*

**SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash.** - This month, I was especially encouraged by the success of our Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) Roundtable held in Mount Vernon. The discussion offered an invaluable opportunity to hear directly about how our standards function on the ground, where they are working well, and where improvements could help us better support agricultural operations across Washington. The insights shared were candid, thoughtful and rooted in the day-to-day realities of farming in a rapidly changing environment.

What stood out most was how closely producer feedback aligned with NRCS priorities - particularly our commitment to putting Farmers First. The CPS Roundtable reinforced that listening is one of our most powerful tools. When producers have a seat at the table, we gain clarity on the practical challenges they face and how our programs can evolve to remain both relevant and accessible.

The conversations also underscored the importance of conservation and the long-term resilience of working lands. Participants discussed shared perspectives on rainfall, energy use, manure management, infrastructure

modernization and the need for flexible standards that reflect regional conditions. These are exactly the kinds of insights that help us refine our technical guidance, improve conservation delivery and continue supporting sustainable production systems that strengthen local communities.

Another key theme was partnership. The CPS Roundtable highlighted how meaningful progress happens when producers, NRCS staff and local partners work side by side. This collaborative approach directly supports our priorities to expand conservation outcomes through trusted relationships and science-based practices.

As we compiled the feedback gathered from this session and shared it with our national leadership, I am proud that Washington is contributing producer-driven insights that will inform updates to standards used across the country. The CPS Roundtable was more than a listening session - it was a clear example of how NRCS can lift up producer voices, strengthen conservation effectiveness and uphold our commitment to voluntary, locally led stewardship.

I look forward to hosting more roundtables in the future! These are very powerful meetings where we can hear straight from the folks we value so greatly - our farmers, ranchers, and foresters!

# East Area

By Aubrey Hoxie

*East Area Conserationist*

How is it already spring? As the flowers start to bloom, and the leaves are budding out, I quickly reflect on where winter went or also ask myself where it was. My hope for this year is that we get enough rain to get our crops growing, but that we stay cool enough to avoid a hot, dry fire season.

Contracting season is now fully underway for the East Area as we are currently finalizing our preapprovals for EQIP; working on a range of forestry, crop, and pasture or range related projects across the area. It should be a great year to see more conservation put on the ground as these projects develop and get implemented. This year, as you all know, we've seen a big focus on Regenerative Agriculture. We've had a LARGE response in the East Area for regenerative ag practice implementation, and have seen a large number of applications come in. I look forward to getting more training out to our staff with this program, and ensuring the understanding and focus of the importance of regenerative agriculture is the forefront of our programs.

## Staffing Updates

Currently, the Snake River team is still working under an acting District Conservationist, while Tracy Hanger is on detail to Oregon as their Assistant State Conservationist for Programs. Mitch Ruchert, Resource Conservationist, in Pomeroy will be filling these shoes through the end of May.

## Local Working Groups

I've had the opportunity of sitting in on one of the two East Area Local Working Groups this past month. Please put on your radar that there are still two local working groups meeting in the East Area. The first will be held in Dayton on May 28th representing the Snake River Team, and second in Ritzville on June 3rd representing the West Palouse team. I encourage each of our partners to reach out to their local Conservation District, or NRCS office to inquire about times, locations, etc. This year's LWG meetings will be covering program implementation for FY2027. I can't express how important it is to be at these meetings, so NRCS can gather information from the local community on what resource concerns are the priority, and where NRCS should focus their efforts.





## Central Area

By Chris Clemens

*Central Area Conservationist*

Hello everyone,

With summer just sixty days away, the world outside is bursting with energy—trees are blooming, irrigation canals are full and lively, and the sage grouse are drumming their distinctive rhythms throughout the landscape. This vibrant renewal in nature is inspiring us as well, fueling our momentum and enthusiasm as our field staff team up with local district staff from Foster Creek CD, Columbia Basin CD, and Benton County CD. Together, we're sharpening our skills and preparing for another busy season of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) field visits.

I want to take a moment to highlight the incredible value of our partnerships. Collaborations are truly the backbone of our conservation work, and it's these connections that help us make real progress on the ground. Many conservation

districts work closely with NRCS to ensure conservation happens exactly where it's needed. These partnerships enable conservation districts to provide direct support to NRCS through agreements that help implement Farm Bill program activities, including CRP.

These programs and partnerships are essential as we look forward to a productive summer ahead. Thank you all for your continued dedication and teamwork, which truly brings conservation to life across our communities.

On the program front, staff are hard at work ranking applications. The EQIP ranking deadline was April 17, 2026, and CSP's was May 1, 2026. Contracting is moving forward at full speed. This year, we had an impressive 683 eligible EQIP applications and 91 CSP applications.

Thank you again for your commitment and partnership. Here's to another successful season together!

# West Area

By Dave Rose

West Area Conservationist

## Staff Actions

Jared Hamman, Resource Conservationist on the Area Staff in Mt. Vernon, is serving a 120-day detail as acting District Conservationist (DC) for the Southwest Team through late June, 2026.

## Flooding Actions

West Area engineering team is still supporting flood-damaged landowners as they contact us. Most have already been visited. This will be an ongoing issue we will address as they come up.

## Programs Update

We currently have 329 eligible applications for EQIP and 101 for CSP, eligibility has been completed and we're moving ahead with preapprovals for all funding categories. We have currently obligated 35 EQIP contracts in the West Area. We have not begun obligating CSP applications yet.





By Keith Griswold  
*ASTC for Programs*

The NRCS Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) offers Washington's tribes, foresters, orchardists, livestock operators and agricultural producers a unique opportunity to adopt holistic, outcome-driven conservation practices that improve soil health, water quality, and long-term productivity.

## What is the Regenerative Pilot Program?

Launched in December 2025, RPP consolidates \$700 million in NRCS funding, \$400 million via EQIP, and \$300 million via CSP, to support regenerative agriculture nationwide. For Washington, its value is \$7.4 million via EQIP and \$3.4 million via CSP. RPP shifts away from piecemeal funding to a whole-farm, outcomes-based model, enabling producers to bundle conservation practices into a single streamlined application.

## Who Can Participate in Washington?

**Tribal Lands and Tribal Producers:** EQIP or CSP-backed RPP, gaining tailored technical support and resources with soil health testing.

**Forest Producers:** Non-industrial forest owners can integrate practices like forest stand improvement, soil health testing, mulch, and water management to increase resilience.

**Orchard or Vineyardists:** Key practices mulching, nutrient/pest management, and soil health testing.

**Crop or Livestock Producers:** From small farms to large operations, RPP supports cover crops, soil health testing, conservation tillage, irrigation improvements, livestock grazing, and crop rotations.

## Core Requirements & Support

- ♦ The application must meet NRCS planning standards for soil and water resource concerns, documented via NRCS's CART tools.
- ♦ At least one of 15 core practices must previously exist on the operation or be implemented; additional practices are encouraged and supported.
- ♦ Soil health testing is required at the start and end of a minimum 5-year contract, with NRCS financial assistance for testing.

To get started, connect with your local NRCS Service Center to explore eligibility and begin planning. From there, develop a conservation plan that reflects your resource concerns and operational goals. As part of the application process, select primary regenerative practices—such as cover crops, no-till, irrigation optimization, mulching, forestry improvements, and livestock management enhancements—to bundle into your Regenerative Pilot Program application.

Applications are accepted on a continuous basis, but must be finalized and submitted by the upcoming batching deadlines for ranking and funding consideration. Once enrolled, you will implement the approved practices, monitor progress, and complete soil-health and outcome reporting through the duration of your contract.

By bringing together technical support, bundled regenerative practices, and outcomes-based incentives, RPP empowers participants to steward their land, water, and communities in sustainable, productive, and resilient ways.

If interested in learning more or helping deliver RPP opportunities and transitioning toward regenerative success? Please contact me.

## Contact

Keith Griswold  
Assistant State Conservationist for Programs  
[keith.griswold@usda.gov](mailto:keith.griswold@usda.gov)



## Management & Strategy

### Office Space Update

By Sam Riser

*Acting ASTC for Management & Strategy*

I am the Acting ASTC for Management and Strategy through August 2026 and wanted to share some positive movement relating to two field office locations that have faced some challenges and a new point of contact for all things related to leasing.

**Puyallup Field Office:** After nearly completing a deal on a new short-term rental, the vendor withdrew their bid at the last minute. Within the remaining bids, we are narrowing in on a potential site using the relatively new Short-Term Rental Program. The

site currently meets all the technical specifications but is significantly more expensive than anticipated. Many additional steps are required before the new Puyallup Service Center location can be announced and is fully ready to receive producers.

**Clarkston Field Office:** A comprehensive on-site review was conducted, photographs taken, along with an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) review and a security review. All deficiencies were uploaded with supporting documentation to the Leasing and Acquisition Branch.

NRCS-WA Leasing Point of Contact (POC) Russ Segio is performing at an exceptional level with respect to lease management for the state. This is the first instance in many years where Management and Strategy have a dedicated employee positioned to manage our locations. Russ is a retired senior enlisted Marine (Master Gunnery Sergeant) and along with leasing, provides staff and partners a wide variety of high-quality support and service.

## Snow Survey Program

By Toby Rodgers

Water Supply Specialist

The NRCS Snow Survey Program provides mountain snowpack data and streamflow forecasts for the western United States. Manually measured snow courses and the Snowpack Telemetry (SNOTEL) network provide essential data used routinely for a number of purposes and interests including water supply forecasts, resource management, research, and even recreation. The SNOTEL network is a robust system of stations that are routinely maintained and updated to provide the most reliable data to all interested stakeholders. Each year the WA NRCS Snow Survey Program works cooperatively with a total of 12 Tribal entities, Public Utilities, and Federal cooperators to measure snow conditions and maintain SNOTEL and snow course locations. Maintaining cooperator relationships is an integral part of the WA NRCS Snow Survey program and vital to a consistent and uninterrupted record of snow and water conditions.



April Water Supply Outlook Report

The winter of 2025-2026 will be remembered as one for the record books, but not necessarily for the most desirable of reasons. Warm, moisture-laden December storms resulted in record level floods for many western Washington rivers as well as record high December precipitation totals at 37 Snow Telemetry (SNOTEL) locations. On the flip side, the snowpack, technically referred to as snow water equivalent (SWE), has been at record lows throughout winter for many basins and SNOTEL sites. As of April 1, 2026, 14 snow courses and SNOTEL sites were reporting record low SWE, with many of those sites having melted out completely. Typically, most sites reach their maximum SWE on or about April 1.

Water supply forecasts (expected streamflow levels) for summer throughout Washington are below normal to slightly below normal. With snowpack conditions not expected to improve through the remainder of spring, it is likely the upcoming forecasts of May 1 and June 1 will remain below normal for all areas. National Weather Service 3-month (May-June-July) forecast indicates a probability for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

More information on the Snow Survey Program and Water Supply Program can be found at the QR codes below.



Dramatically different conditions observed during April 1 snow survey trips. Devil's Park snow course (left) with 100 inches of snow depth and 39 inches SWE (or 95% of normal), and Baird snow course (right) at 0% of normal SWE. In a normal year, Baird snow course would be holding 6.8 inches of SWE (20 inches of snow depth) during the April 1 survey.



NRCS-WA Snow Survey & Water Supply Program



Snow and Water Interactive Map



Water Supply Forecasting



## Ecological Sciences

# *Breaking the Bottleneck* **How Washington's CR Team is Accelerating Conservation Delivery**

By Robert D. Evans  
*State Resource Conservationist*

The Washington Cultural Resources (CR) Team is advancing several important initiatives to help reduce the CR bottleneck and expedite delivery of on-the-ground conservation work for NRCS and its partners. Recent advances include eliminating the backlog of projects needing CR clearance, developing a new CR database, and updating the Prototype Programmatic Agreement (PPA).

At the beginning of 2025, Eastern Washington faced a backlog of hundreds of projects needing CR clearance. Throughout 2025 and into 2026, Grant Smith and Dr. Danielle Kurin dedicated their efforts to processing this large volume of work. Thanks to their persistence, the backlog has now been eliminated allowing the CR Team to direct full attention to Fiscal Year (FY) 25 and FY 26 projects.

The CR Team is developing a new CR database affectionately referred to as Heritage Online Assets & Resource Database (HOARD). HOARD will provide planners with a modern and intuitive method to submit CR information and project requests, make it easier to

determine where a project is within the CR process, and reduce the risk of lost submissions. HOARD will also provide organization and additional automated tools to accelerate the CR process.

Finally, the CR Team is working to update and improve the Prototype Programmatic Agreement (PPA). This agreement determines whether a project needs full consultation or only needs a desktop review by the CR Team. The updated PPA will expand the number of projects that qualify for exemptions, allowing more projects to move through the CR process with only a desktop review rather than full consultation. These changes will help projects receive CR clearance more quickly and efficiently.

Together, these advancements mark a pivotal step forward for the Washington CR Team. By eliminating the CR backlog, launching the HOARD database, and updating the PPA, we are building a more efficient, transparent, and responsive CR process. These improvements not only strengthen our capacity to support conservation work across the state, but also reaffirm our commitment to delivering timely, high-quality service to our partners and communities.

# EQIP Fund Pool Changes for FY2027 Local Working Groups

By Nick Vira

Partnership Liaison

In April, NRCS held an ad-hoc State Technical Committee (STAC) meeting with the purpose of seeking support for proposed changes in how Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) applications are evaluated. NRCS proposed eliminating Statewide EQIP funding categories (Irrigation, Forestry, Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan, Wildlife, and Energy) while maintaining the required Tribal, Socially Disadvantaged and Beginning Farmer/Rancher state funding categories. Changes to program funding categories, evaluation criteria, and Local Working Group (LWG) processes were supported by the STAC and approved by NRCS to be applied in fiscal year 2027. Funding from these discontinued statewide funding categories will be shifted into

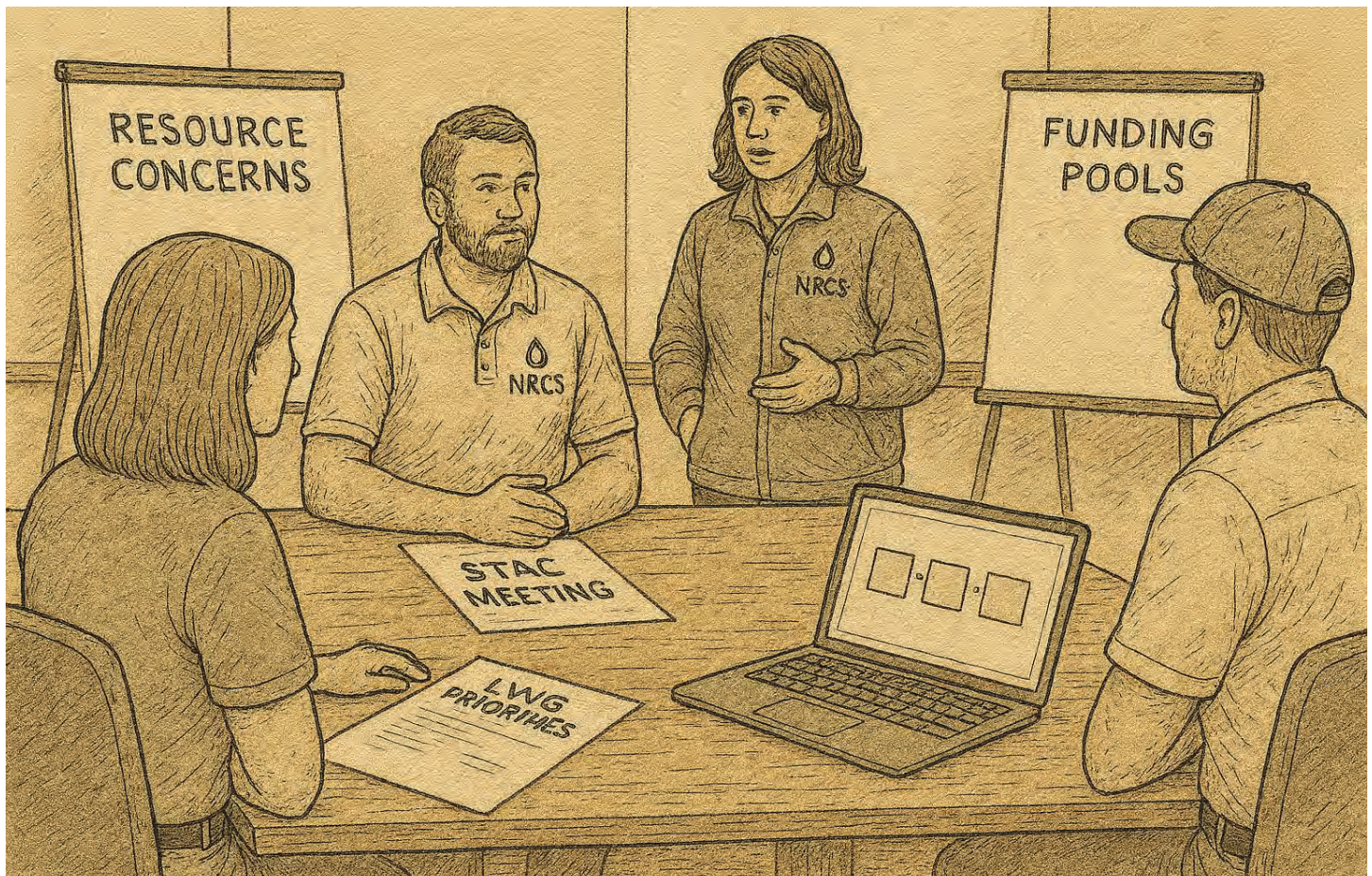
the state's ten LWG fund pools. NRCS will also retain national landscape conservation initiative funding pools, including these funding categories: Sage Grouse, National Water Quality Incentives Program, WaterSmart Initiative, National Air Quality Initiative, and the Regenerative Pilot Program.

These changes impact LWGs, eliminating the need for the development of evaluation ranking questions and criteria. Instead LWGs are charged with identifying their top 3 to 5 natural resource conservation concerns and applications will be evaluated based on whether they address those LWGs priority resource concerns identified by the LWG of the applicant's area. Additionally, LWG funding will utilize Act Now provisions, which establish a conservation threshold value, and applications that meet or exceed the threshold can move

directly into contracting, on a first come, first serve basis, subject to availability of funds.

We are excited to utilize this new opportunity and are looking forward to the efficiencies that will be gained. Some of the benefits include quicker producer access to program contracts, reducing lengthy waiting periods through Act Now, which enables reduced contracting timelines of 45-60 days, and reducing application backlog. This will help reduce the backlog of existing applications. Lastly, LWG fund pools will receive allocations greater than five times what they would be if the state fund pools were continued.

Washington's LWGs are currently underway. For more info about LWG's or EQIP please our website: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/state-offices/washington>



# Outreach Tour Supports Soil Health, NRCS Priorities

By Nate Gallahan

State Public Affairs Specialist

My team recently completed a week-long soil health tour across Western Washington, spanning four different locations with our Soil Health Trailer! The experience highlighted just how central soil health is to our mission and our partnerships. Over several days of field visits, demonstrations and discussions, farmers and NRCS staff had the opportunity to explore soil conditions across a remarkable range of landscapes, from coastal systems to inland valleys. These on-the-ground experiences brought renewed attention to the fundamentals of healthy soils - structure, biology, infiltration and the management decisions that shape them every day. The tour also supported ongoing outreach efforts involving the soil health trailer and its demonstrations.

What stood out most throughout the tour was how often soil health connects directly to NRCS priorities. Preserving and protecting agricultural land depends on soils that function well and support productive operations. Strengthening partnerships is easier when staff and producers can learn side by side and sharing observations in the field. Additionally, delivering high-quality technical assistance requires our teams to continually deepen their understanding of the resource concerns that producers face on the land.

The timing of the tour also aligns well with NRCS's Regenerative Pilot Program, which emphasizes practical, voluntary approaches that help producers improve soil function over time. While the program spans a wide range of production systems, the core principle is the same one reinforced during our tour: healthy soils are the foundation of resilient and successful agricultural operations. Seeing different soils, cropping systems and management approaches firsthand helped producers and staff better understand how regenerative practices may be applied - and adapted - to Washington's diverse conditions.

Perhaps most important, the tour reinforced the value of continual learning. Each site visit prompted new questions and sparked constructive conversations about how NRCS can better support soil health efforts statewide. These insights strengthen our technical capacity; enhance the assistance we provide and strengthen relationships with the producers and partners we serve.

We look forward to carrying the lessons from this tour into future planning and partnership efforts as we continue fulfilling NRCS's mission across Washington.





## NRCS-Washington News

### Dates and Locations Set for Local Working Group Meetings Happening Across Washington

**SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash.** – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington (NRCS-WA) has set the date, time, and location for local working group meetings happening across Washington.

Local Working Groups (LWG) are NRCS’s way of listening to people interested in agriculture and natural resources so they can best serve local communities across Washington. Local Working Groups are typically composed of agricultural producers, Tribes, owners/operators of nonindustrial private forest land, professionals representing agricultural and natural resource interests, and individuals representing a variety of disciplines in the soil, water, wetland, plant, forestry, and wildlife sciences who are interested in agricultural and natural resource issues in their communities.

#### Big Bend Local Working Group

**Date & Time:** July 22, 2026, from 9 a.m. to noon.  
**Location:** Columbia Basin Conservation District (conference room), 903 W 3rd Ave., Moses Lake WA 98837  
**Area:** Columbia Basin CD, & Kittitas.  
**Chair:** Mark Moore  
**District Conservationist:** Holly Taylor, holly.taylor@usda.gov, (509) 925-8585 Ext. 115

#### Northwest Local Working Group

**Date & Time:** June 1, 2026, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. and Aug. 3 from 1 to 2:30 p.m.  
**Location:** 6975 Hannegan Road, Lynden, WA 98264 or

virtually. (Contact Sarah Tanuvasa for directions on how to connect virtually.)

**Area:** Snohomish, Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan Islands, Whidbey Island, Clallam, & Jefferson.

**Chair:** Brandy Reed

**District Conservationist:** Sarah Tanuvasa, sarah.tanuvasa@usda.gov, (360) 488-4819

#### Snake River Local Working Group

**Date & Time:** May 28, 2026, from 9 a.m. to noon  
**Location:** Dayton Best Western Inn meeting room; 507 East Main Street, Dayton, WA 99328  
**Area:** Asotin County, Columbia, Franklin, Pomeroy, & Walla Walla.  
**Chair:** Lance Frederick  
**District Conservationist:** Tracy Hanger, tracy.hanger@usda.gov, (509) 956-3752

#### Southwest Local Working Group

**Date & Time:** May 27, 2026, from 10 a.m. to noon.  
**Location:** Cowlitz Historical Museum, 405 Allen Street, Kelso, WA 98626  
**Area:** Clark, Underwood (Skamania), Lewis County, Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Grays Harbor, & Pacific County.  
**Chair:** Joe Shulke  
**District Conservationist:** Jared Hamman (Acting), jared.hamman@usda.gov, (360) 488-4821

#### West Palouse Working Group

**Date & Time:** June 3, 2026, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
**Location:** Adams County Public Works Building, 210 W Alder Ave, Ritzville WA 99169  
**Area:** Lincoln & Adams.  
**Chair:** Jeff Schibel  
**District Conservationist:** Carolyn Edenbo, carolyn.edenbo@usda.gov, (509) 659-1761

# SNOW SURVEY

## Washington's Water Supply Reports

### March 2026

Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) statewide for March 1, 2026 is at 54% of normal. Unfortunately with only 36 days left before the statewide median peak SWE (peak snowpack) date of April 5, it will take a significant change in weather patterns to make up ground. As of March 1 within the SNOTEL network of stations in Washington, 5 were at record low SWE and 9 were at the 2nd lowest SWE for their period of record. Basin SWE conditions across the state are variable but 6 basins are well below normal (less than 50% median SWE for this date) with the Upper Yakima, Central and South Puget Sound basins recording the lowest values at 35%, 39%, and 36% SWE respectively. 7 basins are below normal (50-69% range in median SWE) and the North Puget Sound basin is slightly below normal with a SWE of 72%. As of March 1, overall lack of snow in the mountains is ...

Read more via the QR Code ->



### April 2026

Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) statewide for April 1, 2026 is at 52% of normal. With nearly all Snow Telemetry (SNOTEL) network stations reaching their peak snow accumulation date (on or around April 1 most typically), the peak season for accumulating snowpack has passed. As of April 1, 14 SNOTEL stations and snow courses in Washington were at record low SWE and 9 were at the 2nd lowest SWE for their period of record. Basin SWE conditions across the state are variable but 9 basins are well below normal (less than 50% median SWE for this date) with the Upper Yakima and Olympic basins recording the lowest values at 36% and 35% SWE respectively. 4 basins are below normal (50-69% range in median SWE) and the North Puget Sound basin is slightly below normal with a SWE of 70%. As of April 1, overall lack of snow in the mountains is ...

Read more via the QR code ->



## NRCS Announces Second Application Sign-ups for Agricultural Land Easements

WASHINGTON, DC- April 29, 2026 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is establishing a second national deadline for agricultural producers and landowners to apply for fiscal year 2026 assistance in the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The new deadline for entities to apply is May 29, 2026. NRCS is providing up to \$200 million in funding for the application period for agricultural land easements.

“At NRCS, we are putting Farmers First by actively working to preserve and protect America’s agricultural land for future generations,” said NRCS Chief Aubrey J.D. Bettencourt. “Through voluntary conservation easements, and strategic partnerships, we are committed to slowing the loss of productive farmland and keeping working lands in the hands of farmers and ranchers.”

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), signed by President Trump on July 4, 2025, delivers the largest long-term investment in NRCS conservation programs in decades, delivering over \$4 billion in ACEP funding. NRCS began implementation this year.

While NRCS accepts applications on a continuous basis, NRCS uses application cutoff periods to assess and rank applications based on their potential conservation impact. NRCS is offering a second national application period for ACEP Agricultural Land Easements with a May 29, 2026, application deadline. A complete Agricultural Land Easement application only requires the following:

- ◆ Completed form NRCS-CPA-41A, “Parcel Sheet for Entity Application for an Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) Agreement”,
- ◆ Proof of ownership,
- ◆ Written pending offer,
- ◆ Map or geospatial boundary of proposed easement (NRCS provides an online tool to help you create this map with a geospatial boundary) , and
- ◆ Documented access to the easement.

Landowners are encouraged to complete eligibility paperwork with their local Farm Service Agency county office as soon as possible.

Through conservation programs, NRCS provides technical



and financial assistance to help producers and landowners make conservation improvements on their land that benefit natural resources, build resiliency, and contribute to the nation’s broader effort to improve natural resource conditions on America’s private lands.

### Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

ACEP helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands; protect the agricultural viability and related conservation values of eligible land by limiting nonagricultural uses of that land that negatively affect the agriculture and conservation values; and protect grazing and related conservation values by restoring or conserving eligible land.

Agricultural land easements provide cost-share assistance to eligible entities to acquire easements from qualifying landowners, preserving agricultural use, including grazing, and protecting associated conservation values on eligible land.

### How to Apply

Entities and landowners interested in fiscal year 2026 funding should apply through NRCS at their local USDA Service Center. All applications must be received by May 29, 2026, to be considered in the second round of funding for fiscal year 2026. Funding is provided through a competitive process. NRCS will hold applications received after this date and consider them for subsequent rounds, as funding permits. Interested applicants can view additional state’s ranking dates online.

### More Information

To learn more about NRCS programs, producers can contact their local USDA Service Center.



## NRCS-National News

### **USDA Announces \$52 Million to Boost Public Access to Private Lands for Hunting and Fishing**

**WASHINGTON, DC- April 24, 2026** – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is announcing \$52 million to help state and tribal governments encourage private landowners to allow public access to their land for hunting, fishing and other wildlife-dependent recreation through the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP). USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications through June 8, 2026 on Grants.gov for this program that benefits landowners and the public.

“The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program is a critical source of funding for increasing public access to private lands for hunting and fishing, while also supporting farmers and contributing to habitat conservation efforts,” said NRCS Chief Aubrey J.D. Bettencourt. “This program is about opportunities for landowners and the public.”

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) restored funding for the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP). OBBBA strengthens the ability of NRCS to support farmers, ranchers, and partners in tackling conservation challenges at the landscape scale.

States and tribal governments may apply to use VPA-HIP grant funding to create new or expand existing public access programs or provide incentives to improve habitat on land enrolled in their public access programs.

For example, through previous awards:

Arizona Fish and Game Department opened 4.8 million acres of private and land-locked public lands in Arizona for public use.

Missouri Department of Conservation enrolled 30,000 acres into the Missouri Outdoor Recreation Access Program to increase and enhance wildlife habitat for small game and other wildlife species on private land in the state.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife offered 75,000 acres to the public for hunting wild turkey, pheasant and big game, at no cost to the user. These acres are spread over six large counties.

VPA-HIP is a competitive grants program available to state and tribal governments. Projects may last up to three years. Projects can receive up to \$3 million, and project sponsors can use up to 25% of funds to provide incentives to landowners to improve wildlife habitat on enrolled public access program lands.

See the notice on Grants.gov for information on how to apply. For more information on VPA-HIP visit the NRCS website.

For more than 90 years, NRCS has helped farmers, ranchers and forestland owners make investments in their operations and local communities to improve the quality of our air, water, soil, and wildlife habitat. NRCS uses the latest science and technology to help keep working lands working, boost agricultural economies, and increase the competitiveness of American agriculture. NRCS provides one-on-one, personalized advice and financial assistance and works with producers to help them reach their goals through voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs. For more information, visit [nrcs.usda.gov](https://nrcs.usda.gov).



# Focus on: Clean Water Guidance Suites of Practices



Figure 1. Guidance includes recommendations for landuse practices, including irrigation management, to protect water.

## Guidance for healthy farms & water

Washington is home to some of the nation’s most productive farmlands. The way landowners manage their lands also has important impacts on water quality. Agricultural operators are key partners in our efforts to support clean and cool water for drinking, recreation, shellfish harvesting, and salmon recovery across the state.

The Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture (Clean Water Guidance) outlines Ecology’s recommended best management practices (BMPs) to protect and restore water quality. The guidance is intended to support healthy farms while helping producers meet clean water standards.

### Developing recommendations

The Clean Water Guidance advisory group helped us develop recommendations that cover the breath of BMPs commonly used by producers and to be responsive to the diversity of agricultural types in our state.

The advisory group included representatives from Producer Groups, Washington State University-Extension, Conservation Districts, the State Conservation Commission, Washington State Dept. of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service

(NRCS), Environmental Protection Agency, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, and other agricultural and conservation experts.

## Suites of practices overview

Farms are complex operations shaped by factors including location, climate, soil type, and production methods. With this variability, protecting water quality requires a thoughtful combination of structural, vegetative, and management practices.

To help with implementation, we’ve created a “road map” for identifying recommended combinations of BMPs that are included in the guidance - the **suites of practices**. While agricultural systems are diverse, many crop and livestock operations share common characteristics and rely on similar BMPs to reduce potential impacts to water health.

When reviewing the guidance, we recommend starting with the introduction and suites of practices. These sections provide a foundation and help guide operators to BMP-specific recommendations. For additional information on implementation and effectiveness, see the related appendix.

## Site-specific factors will determine recommendations

Our goal is to assist producers to identify site-specific practices that fully protect water quality, reflective of their farm’s unique considerations.

### Operation categories

To support on-the-ground management decisions, the suites are organized by three agricultural operation categories:

#### Livestock operations

Grazing management practices can maintain healthy pastures and rangelands while protecting water by reducing runoff, preventing erosion, preserving riparian areas, and by promoting healthy forage use.

Animal confinement and manure management practices help control livestock and waste to protect surface and groundwater, promote animal welfare, enhance farm efficiency, and support nutrient recycling.

## Row crop, small grains, and forage crop operations

Practices are intended to reduce erosion and runoff, improve infiltration, maintain soil fertility, and support efficient, resilient, and environmentally sustainable cropping systems.

## Tree fruit, vineyards, and perennial berry operations

Practices are intended to reduce erosion and runoff, improve infiltration, and maintain soil fertility.

## Primary and supporting practices

Each suite of BMPs is divided into two tiers, to be used in combination depending on an operation's unique conditions:

### Primary best management practices

Foundational practices that when properly implemented and maintained are expected to protect and restore water quality.

### Supporting practices

Practices that complement the primary BMPs and may be used to address site-specific factors.

## Using the Clean Water Guidance

### Provide assurances & assistance

The Clean Water Guidance is designed to provide producers with certainty and predictability. When an operation implements recommended practices that aligns with the guidance and are reflective of site-specific conditions, Ecology will presume water quality is protected.

We also use the guidance to inform watershed cleanup plan development and when providing technical and financial assistance. Each year, Ecology awards millions of dollars to fund clean water projects. By integrating the guidance into our funding program, we can direct financial assistance towards both implementation and maintenance of practices that support healthy water as well as farms.

### Connection to other guidance

The Clean Water Guidance is a resource for the agricultural community that complements existing

conservation guidance, including NRCS Field Office Technical Guides (FOTGs). It does not replace FOTGs, the farm planning process, or establish new regulatory requirements. Clean Water Guidance BMPs should be considered when planning and selecting practices with the goal of protecting water quality.

### Is it required?

While the recommendations are designed to protect water health, they are not required. Using Ecology's guidance provides an opportunity to proactively protect and restore water quality. As these practices were evaluated for their effectiveness in supporting clean water, they can offer assurances to both us and landowners.

At the same time, not implementing recommended practices does not automatically mean water quality is negatively impacted. Along with our partners, we are open to site-specific solutions. Ecology remains responsible for determining if water quality is protected based on site-specific conditions.

## Access the guidance

Visit our [webpage](#)<sup>1</sup> for more information on the guidance and to access materials:



## We're here to help!

Reach out to learn about assistance that may be available to you to implement and maintain BMPs.

[nonpoint@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:nonpoint@ecy.wa.gov)  
360-918-4958

### ADA accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, email [kathryn.loy@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:kathryn.loy@ecy.wa.gov), call (564)669-9205 or dial 711 to call through the Washington Telecommunications Relay for services like text telephone (TTY). Visit [ecology.wa.gov/ADA](https://ecology.wa.gov/ADA) for more accessibility information.

<sup>1</sup> <https://ecology.wa.gov/regulations-permits/plans-policies/plan-to-control-nonpoint-sources-of-pollution>



## March/April 2026

As spring unfolds across Washington, it brings with it exciting opportunities for hunters and anglers alike. Spring turkey season is underway, the statewide trout fishing opener just kicked off, and outdoor recreationists are looking ahead to summer trips out on the water and in the field.

April also marked the end of the 2026-2027 [North of Falcon](#) salmon season-setting process. It concluded on April 12 at the Pacific Fishery Management Council meetings in Portland, Oregon, after months of public meetings, technical analysis, and negotiations among state and federal partners, and tribal co-managers.

This annual process that began in late February requires navigating a complex mix of preseason forecasts, conservation constraints, legal requirements, and public input to develop fisheries across Washington. It not only involves representatives from federal, state, and tribal governments, but many from the recreational and commercial fishing industries as well as members of the public.

Throughout this process, WDFW staff worked hard to maximize fishing opportunities where possible, evaluating various fishery concepts, weighing tradeoffs between areas, and advocating for seasons that provide quality opportunities while ensuring conservation obligations are met.

As the season unfolds, look for [The Salmon Fishing Current blog: summer and fall edition](#) in mid-May, which will cover ongoing salmon fishery-related topics and issues, along with any in-season management changes. We'll also continue to share information about Washington's salmon and steelhead fisheries in our news releases and social media platforms.

Details about previous and upcoming meetings and other important North of Falcon updates will be available on the [North of Falcon webpage](#). Recordings of all the 2026 public meetings are available on [WDFW's YouTube channel](#).



Kelly Susewind, Director



*Springtime flowers in WDFW's South Central Region. Photo by WDFW.*

## **Topics in this message include:**

- **Washington's wolf population increases 17% in 2025**
- **Skagit River dams relicensing agreement includes major investments in fish passage, habitat restoration, tribal and local communities**

- **Update about availability of waterproof, tear-resistant licensing paper**
- **WDFW's 11th annual Trout Derby is underway**
- **Theler Wetlands benefits from restoration and renovation projects**
- **Kenmore Air and WDFW collaborate on Salish Sea seabird surveys**
- **WDFW invites participation in workshops on kelp gathering and conservation**
- **New rules in effect as clam, mussel, and oyster seasons get underway**
- **Northern Pikeminnow Sport-Reward Fishery enters its 36th season**



### **Washington's wolf population increases 17% in 2025**

Following a decline at the end of 2024, the [Washington Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Annual Report](#) shows that the minimum year-end wolf count increased by more than 17% at the end of 2025. That puts the wolf population in Washington at its highest level to

date at 270 wolves, 23 breeding pairs, and 49 packs statewide. The previous year's count was 230 wolves, 18 breeding pairs, and 43 packs. Six packs either formed or reestablished in 2025, but there were still no packs or breeding pairs documented in the Southern Cascades and Northwest Coast Recovery Region at the end of 2025.

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## Skagit River dams relicensing agreement includes major investments in fish passage, habitat restoration, tribal and local communities

In March, Seattle City Light [announced](#) an agreement for relicensing the utility's [hydropower dams](#) on the Skagit River for the next 50 years. WDFW leaders and staff experts on fish, wildlife, and habitat have been closely involved in negotiations on the agreement since 2018.

“After nearly eight years of discussion with Seattle City Light, Skagit treaty tribes, and other federal, state, and local agencies, this relicensing agreement is good news for fish passage, habitat restoration, and people from the Skagit Valley to the City of Seattle,” said Director Susewind.

The Skagit River watershed, the largest river basin flowing into Puget Sound, is a crown jewel for Washington’s natural heritage. Numerous fish and wildlife species are present in the basin, including all five species of Pacific salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. For decades WDFW has worked to recover salmon and steelhead populations in the Skagit Watershed while supporting sustainable fisheries and recreation. We also operate the Marblemount Hatchery on the Cascade River, a major tributary, as well as managing numerous water access areas and wildlife area units on the Skagit.

The relicensing agreement, particularly major investments in fish passage and habitat restoration, is expected to increase sustainable salmon harvest and other fishing opportunities to support recreational fisheries and tribal treaty rights and contribute to recovery of federal- and state-listed fish species in the Skagit Basin.

In April, the [Seattle City Council](#) and [Skagit County](#) signed the relicensing agreement. Learn more in our [statement](#) and news coverage from [The Seattle Times](#).



## Update about availability of waterproof, tear-resistant licensing paper

Due to a global shortage of petroleum-based materials, WDFW and its 600 license dealer locations will no longer sell waterproof, tear resistant licensing paper as early as May 13, 2026.

While customer experiences may vary across license dealers, in the interim, customers may find that dealers are running low or out of this style of petroleum-based licensing paper entirely. As early as May 13, customers won't be able to buy waterproof, tear-resistant WDFW licensing documents any longer.

Customers will be able to print licensing documents on standard printer paper at home or at a license dealer location. Alternatively, customers can select to become a mobile license holder and use the new MyWDFW mobile licensing application. Learn more in WDFW's news release.

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### **WDFW's 11th annual Trout Derby is underway**

The WDFW Trout Derby is back in 2026 from April 25 through Oct. 31. More than 100 lakes statewide have been stocked with green tagged rainbow trout. Each tag represents one of the more than 900 prizes valued at more than \$44,000 and donated by over 60 generous businesses this year.

Using the hashtag #WATroutDerby, anglers were asked to share their opening week fishing photos via Instagram.

The winning photo will win a WDFW prize pack.

The WDFW Trout Derby is open to anyone with a valid 2026 fishing license (children under 16 fish for free), and no entry fee or registration is required. [Our derby webpage](#) details the donors, lakes, and ways to claim a prize.

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### **Theler Wetlands benefits from restoration and renovation projects**

A lot of important work is happening at the Theler Wetlands, located in Mason County at the southeast end of Hood Canal.

WDFW and Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group (HCSEG) are [restoring 7 acres of estuary habitat](#) to reestablish natural tidal processes, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, mitigate flood impacts, and improve recreational access. The final construction phase — building an elevated boardwalk where a breached levee was removed — is expected to be completed in summer 2026.

WDFW and HCSEG are also renovating the Theler Wetlands Nature Center, which will involve modernizing the building and adding new interpretive exhibits. You can share feedback [through our online survey](#).

The Theler Wetlands is part of the 543-acre Union River Unit of the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area. The land provides recreational opportunities for nature enthusiasts while protecting the estuarine ecosystem from development pressure in a growing community. Project updates are available on [WDFW's](#) and [HCSEG's](#) webpages.

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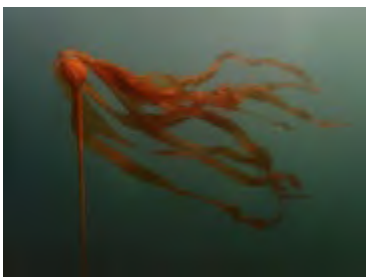


### **Kenmore Air and WDFW collaborate on Salish Sea seabird surveys**

Kenmore Air and WDFW staff from the Waterfowl Section of Wildlife Program's Game Division, recently completed this year's Midwinter Aerial Seabird Survey, continuing a decades-long partnership supporting a scientific study monitoring the abundance, distribution, and long-term trends of marine birds across Washington's Salish Sea waters. This year, the partners worked together to modernize the surveys, using new digital technology to make the surveys more accurate and informative than ever before.

Seabird surveys are conducted in mid-winter when marine birds are least likely to be migrating, allowing biologists to capture the most reliable population snapshots of the year. WDFW and partner agencies use survey results to inform wildlife management, coastal and marine planning, scientific research, and permitting decisions.

Kenmore Air provided aircraft, pilots, and operational support for more than 70 hours of flights this year, conducted at an altitude of 860 feet and a ground speed of 105 knots along routes covering Washington's inland marine waters. [Refer to our news release](#) to learn more about this long-standing partnership. Learn more about waterfowl identification and hunting [on our webpage](#). Or get tips for watching seabirds on our [wildlife viewing webpage](#).



### **WDFW invites participation in workshops on kelp gathering and conservation**

Since 2025, April 16 is celebrated as Washington's official [Bull Kelp Day](#). More information is available from [Northwest Straits Commission](#) and on [DNR's Kelp and Eelgrass Health and Conservation Plan webpage](#).

"Bull Kelp Day is a time for everyone to celebrate and spotlight Washington's kelp, building awareness and support for our marine forests, which help sustain local wildlife,

cultures, and livelihoods,” said Jeff Whitty, Kelp Program Manager with Northwest Straits Commission.

On Bull Kelp Day, WDFW and partners including the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Northwest Straits Commission, and Asia Pacific Cultural Center invited participation in a series of workshops on kelp gathering and conservation around Puget Sound. Learn more in our [news release](#).

The workshops are part of a new [social science research project](#) working to better understand human interactions with, connections to, and uses of kelp. Participation in the project will inform future kelp management, conservation, harvesting opportunities, and communications and outreach. Participants will include recreational and commercial seaweed harvesters, individuals or organizations involved in kelp conservation, and other stakeholders, partners, or interested members of the public. People interested in participating should sign up for information about upcoming workshops using [WDFW’s project sign-up form](#).



### **New rules in effect as clam, mussel, and oyster seasons get underway**

The return of daytime low tides brings opportunities for recreational clam, mussel, and oyster gathering across hundreds of [Washington’s public beaches](#) now open or soon reopening for harvesting. With so many options, WDFW encourages shellfish gatherers to visit less popular public beaches to spread out harvest pressure, which has increased in recent years.

“From easy-access sites to those you can reach by boat or on foot, there’s an adventure for everyone,” said Chris Eardley, WDFW’s Puget Sound shellfish policy coordinator. “Seeking less-visited beaches, avoiding obviously busy sites, having a backup plan, and visiting on less popular weekdays all help reduce impacts to Washington’s valuable shellfish beaches.”

[New rules are in effect](#) for the 2026 season to conserve shellfish populations, address harvest effort increases, and promote sustainable shellfish gathering. Learn more in our [news release](#).

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## Northern Pikeminnow Sport-Reward Fishery enters its 36th season

The 2026 [Northern Pikeminnow Sport-Reward Fishery](#) returns May 1 for its 36th season, giving anglers the opportunity to earn cash while supporting salmon and steelhead recovery in the Columbia and Snake rivers. Funded by the Bonneville Power Administration, the program pays anglers to catch northern pikeminnow, a native fish that consumes millions of young salmon and steelhead each year.

The goal of the program is not to eradicate native northern pikeminnow, but to remove 10-20% of the larger, predator-sized northern pikeminnow each year.

Removing these fish helps shift the population toward smaller individuals, which consume fewer salmon and steelhead smolts.

Since the fishery began, anglers have removed nearly 6 million northern pikeminnow within the program's boundary, which has reduced predation on salmon and steelhead smolts by up to 40% compared to pre-program levels.

In 2025, anglers turned in 150,456 qualifying northern pikeminnow, with each angler averaging 11.9 fish per day. The program's top angler earned \$159,310 by catching 15,715 fish. The top angler payout and total catch is the second highest in program history, falling just short of the current record of \$164,260 and 16,150 set in 2024.

For more information about the sport-reward fishery including regulations, locations and maps, registration, and catch data, refer to [pikeminnow.org](http://pikeminnow.org) or call the hotline at 800-858-9015.

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