Washington State Conservation Commission

Meeting Packet

December 3, 2026

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

Stevenson, Washington

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."*

Washington State Conservation Commission

Meeting Agenda

Thursday, December 3, 2026

WSCC Business Meeting

Stevenson, 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 contact Alicia McClendon at amcclendon@scc.wa.gov or call 711 relay service. All accommodation requests should be received no later than November 19, 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	ITEM	LEAD
8:30 a.m.	**Call to order/Welcome/Introductions** • Commissioner Roll Call • Guest Introductions • Pledge of Allegiance • Additions/Corrections to agenda items	Chair Kearney
8:45 a.m.	**Executive Director's Report**	Director Thompson

TIME	ITEM	LEAD
9:00 a.m.	**Consent Agenda** *(Action items)* **Public comment will be allowed after each presentation prior to adopting action. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.**	
	a) Out-of-State Travel	Director Thompson
	b) September 17, 2026, Draft Business Meeting Minutes	Chair Kearney
9:05 a.m.	**District Operations** *(Action item)* **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 Mid-Term Supervisor Appointment: • Benton Conservation District	Comm. Troutman
	d) Franklin Conservation District New Election Areas	Tami Stubbs
9:10 a.m.	**Commission Operations** *(Action item)*	
	e) Nomination of Chair and Vice-Chair	Comm. Beeler
9:15 a.m.	**Policy, Budget and Finance** *(Information Only)*	
	f) Ombuds Workgroup Update	Sarah Groth
	g) Returned Funds from FY26 and Fiscal Year End Figures	Sarah Groth
9:35 a.m.	**Program Updates** *(Action items)* **Public comment will be allowed after each presentation prior to adopting action. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.**	
	h) Approve change to extend time to complete CREP Dis-enrolled Assistance	Brian Cochrane
	i) Program Manual Update: CREP	Brian Cochrane
	j) Program Manual Update: Sustainable Farms and Fields (SFF)	Karen Hills
10:20 a.m.	**District Operations** *(Information Only)*	
	k) District Operations Report	*Packet item only*

TIME	ITEM	LEAD
10:20 a.m.	**Partner Updates** *(Information Only)* l) Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) m) Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) n) Washington Association of District Employees (WADE)	 *Packet item only* *Packet item only* Sarah Moorehead
10:25 a.m.	**20-minute break**	
10:45 a.m.	**Executive Session** The Commission will convene in executive session to review the performance of the Executive Director pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(g). The executive session is expected to last approximately 30 minutes.	
11:15 a.m.	**Reconvene from Executive Session / Closing Comments**	Chair Kearney
11:15 a.m.	**Adjourn Business Meeting**	Chair Kearney
11:15 a.m.	**Strategic Planning Workship Part 1 (Mission)**	Tara Long
11:55 a.m.	**Lunch**	
1:05 p.m.	**Strategic Planning Workshop Part 2 (Vision, Values, Objectives)** Facilitator: Tara Long	
2:45 p.m.	**Adjourn Strategic Planning Workshop**	Chair Kearney

Washington State Conservation Commission

December 3, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members

FROM: James Thompson, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Out of State Travel Approval

Action Item	x
Informational Item	

Summary:

The SCC Executive Director and commissioners who are not state agency representatives are required to obtain prior Commission approval to attend out-of-state meetings and conferences.

To streamline this process, staff are proposing an approach in which all known out-of-state meetings and conferences are presented to the Commission for consideration and approval in batches. This will allow anticipated travel to be reviewed collectively rather than requiring a separate approval request for each meeting.

Below is a list of current known out-of-state meetings and conferences anticipated for 2027.

1. National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) 81st Annual Meeting
   - Dates: February 6–10, 2027 (including travel days)
   - Location: Las Vegas, Nevada

2. National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) Meeting
   - Date: February 6, 2027
   - Location: Las Vegas, Nevada

3. National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Spring Fly-In
   - Date: March 2027 (exact dates to be announced)
   - Location: Washington, D.C.

4. National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Southwest and Pacific Joint Regional Meeting
   - Date: Summer 2027 (exact dates to be announced)
   - Location: To be announced

Additional out-of-state meetings, conferences, or travel opportunities that arise during the year and are not included in this list will be brought before the Commission for separate consideration and approval. To streamline approval, efforts will be made to present out-of-state travel in batches.

Requested Action:

Staff request Commission approval for the Executive Director and eligible Commission members to attend the anticipated 2027 out-of-state meetings and conferences identified above as appropriate and based on meeting relevance, availability, and agency needs.

This annual approval approach is intended to streamline the travel approval process while maintaining Commission oversight. Any additional out-of-state travel not identified in this memo will continue to require prior Commission approval.

Staff Contact:

James Thompson, Executive Director / jthompson@scc.wa.gov

Washington State Conservation Commission

Draft Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2026

Regular Business Meeting ~

The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission/SCC) met virtually as well as in-person on Thursday, September 17, 2026, in North Bonneville, Washington. Chair Cherie Kearney called the meeting to order at 9:30 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
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)

A quorum was present.

COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT

James Thompson, Executive Director
Alicia McClendon, Administrative Assistant
Allisa Carlson, Central WA Regional Manager
Bill Eller, Special Projects Coordinator
Dani Madrone, Director of Policy & Governmental Affairs
Kate Delavan, Deputy Director
Lori Gonzalez, Executive Assistant
Sarah Groth, Chief Financial Officer
Scott Noble, NE WA Regional Manager
Tami Stubbs, SE WA Regional Manager

Additional staff are listed in the attachments.

PARTNERS REPRESENTED

Angie Reseland, Dept of Fish and Wildlife (online)
Nick Vira, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Sarah Moorehead, WA Association of District Employees
Tom Salzer, WA Association of Conservation Districts (online)
Heather Wendt, WA Association of Conservation Districts
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 Alicia McClendon. 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 July 16, 2026- Business Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the draft July 16, 2026 Business Meeting Minutes.

Seconded by Commissioner McKay. Motion passed.

Out of State Travel Request

Motion by Commissioner Troutman to approve the SCC executive director and/or commissioners to travel to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for the 2026 NASCA Annual Meeting, October 4-7, 2026.

Seconded by Commissioner Gelardi. Motion passed.

DISTRICT OPERATIONS

Conservation District Mid-Term Supervisor Appointments

Thurston Conservation District:

Motion by Commissioner Blake to appoint Kevin Cornell to fill the vacant mid-term appointed position at Thurston Conservation District.

Seconded by Commissioner McKay. Motion passed.

Underwood Conservation District:

Motion by Commissioner Troutman to appoint Spencer Bohaboy to fill the vacant mid-term appointed position at Underwood Conservation District.

Seconded by Commissioner Cochran. Motion passed.

POLICY, BUDGET AND FINANCE

Rulemaking: Commission Meetings

Motion by Commissioner McKay to approve the changes to WAC Chapter 135-04-020 as recommended by the Executive Director and direct staff to file the final rule change with the Office of the Code Reviser.

Seconded by Commissioner Blake. Motion passed.

Rulemaking: Conservation District Elections

Motion by Commissioner Troutman to approve the changes to WAC Chapter 135-110 as recommended by the Executive Director and to adopt the final rule, as set out in this memo and the supporting materials, including the Concise Explanatory Statement."

Seconded by Commissioner McKay. Motion passed.

Motion by Commissioner McKay to amend the motion to change “a conflict of interest” to “shared financial interest” for the definition of polling officer in WAC 135-110-110.”

Seconded by Commissioner Beeler. Motion passed.

Updating the Election and Appointment Guide

Motion by Commissioner Beeler to approve that the Election and Appointment Guide is no longer considered a policy document that requires Commission approval and can be managed within agency operations.

Seconded by Commissioner Blake. Motion passed.

PROGRAMS

Program Guideline Update: Modification of CREP Assistance

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve date change in the CREP Dis-enrolled Assistance Guidelines for draft 30-day comment period.

Seconded by Commissioner Gelardi. Motion passed.

Chair Kearney adjourned the meeting at 1:17 p.m.

Zoom Registration Report for September 17, 2026

	First Name	Last Name		First Name	Last Name
1	Lori	Gonzalez	25	dean	hellie
2	Karen	Hills	26	Becca	Hebron
3	Margaret	McKeown	27	Paul	Andersson
4	Lora	Liegel	28	Ryan	Williams
5	Megan	Stewart	29	Joanna	Cowles Cleveland
6	Brandy	Reed	30	Savannah	Crnick
7	Virginia	Shogren	31	Levi	Keesecker
8	Tami	Stubbs	32	Mike	Baden
9	Jennifer	Coe	33	Spencer	Bohaboy
10	Alan	Chapman	34	Jim	Kropf
11	Hilary	Aten	35	Katie	Allen
12	Toyo	Garber	36	Paul	D'Agnolo
13	Elizabeth	Bella	37	Noel Paige	DeChambeau
14	Nichole	Reed	38	Josh	Giuntoli
15	Jodi	Prout	39	Alicia	McClendon
16	Kim	Williams	40	Brad	Riehle
17	Nicholas	Peak	41	Angie	Reseland
18	Annie	Byerley	42	Kara	Kaelber
19	Andy	Tate	43	Sarah	Moorehead
20	nicole	boyes	44	Michael	Nordin
21	Josh	Larsen	45	Allisa	Carlson
22	Arthur	Smith	46	Kate	Delavan
23	Tom	Salzer	47	Dave	Hedrick
24	Tara	Long			

Washington State
Conservation Commission

Thursday, September 17, 2026
Regular Business Meeting

Please Sign In

	Name	Entity	Email
1.	James Thompson	SCC	
2.	Bill Blake	SCC	
3.	Bill Eller	SCC	
4.	[illegible]	SCC	
5.	Heather Wendt	WACD	
6.	Brook Beeler		
7.	Alicia McClendon	SCC	
8.	Lori Gonzalez	SCC	
9.	Kate Delavan	SCC	
10.	Amy McKay	WACD/SCC	
11.	Ryan Bayle	WACD	
12.	Barbara Bailey	UCD	
13.	Larry Cochran	SCC	
14.	Tara Hyatt	UCD	
15.	Jan Thomas	CTD	
16.	Jeff Schibel	LCCD	
17.	Craig Nelson	Okanogan CD	
18.	ALLAN WARREN	SCC	
19.	Scott Seibel	VCC	
	Dani Madrone	SCC	
	Dana Coggon	PCD (Pierce CD)	

Washington State
Conservation Commission

Thursday, September 17, 2026
Regular Business Meeting

Please Sign In

	Name	Entity	Email
20.	Ryan Williams	Cowlitz CD	on file
21.	Mike Lopez	SCC	mlopez@scc.wa.gov
22.	Sarah Groen	SCC	sgroen@scc.wa.gov
23.	Mary Malone	PSCD	mmalone@pscd.org
24.	Sarah Jones	Snoh CD	sjones@snohomishcd.org
25.	Jennifer Boie	Palouse CD	jenniferb@palousecd.org
26.	Zach Oppenheimer	Chuck CD	on file
27.	Alisa Carlson	SCC	on file
28.	Evan Bander	MCD	on file
29.	Sarah Moorehead	WADE/TCD	"
30.			
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Washington State Conservation Commission

December 3, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Alicia McClendon, Administrative Assistant

SUBJECT: Benton Conservation District Mid-Term Appointment

Action Item	X
Informational Item	

Background and Summary:

The SCC received one application for a mid-term appointment on the Benton Conservation District Board of Supervisors.

The application was sent to all Commission members for their review prior to the December 3rd business meeting. Commissioners and Commission staff followed the process adopted in March of 2018 to conduct a more comprehensive vetting of the applications received for Commission appointment, including conducting an interview with the candidate listed below and contacting references.

Requested Action:

A recommendation for the appointment will be given by the central area elected commission member for SCC approval at the December 3, 2026 meeting.

Note: To protect the personal information, the application received by SCC will not be included in the public meeting packet; only the name of the applicant is provided below. All members were sent full application for review ahead of time.

Conservation District Mid-Term Supervisor Applicant

Conservation District	*Incumbent*	*Name of Applicant*	*Regional Manager*
Benton	Vacant	1. Perry Beale	Tami Stubbs

Staff Contact:

Alicia McClendon, ***amcclendon@scc.wa.gov*** and *Tami Stubbs,* ***tsubbs@scc.wa.gov***

Washington State Conservation Commission

December 3, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Allisa Carlson, Director of Conservation District Services
Tami Stubbs, Southeast Regional Manager

SUBJECT: Franklin Conservation District Electoral District Boundaries

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Action Item	X
Informational Item	

Summary:

Franklin Conservation District is currently divided into three electoral districts. One supervisor who resides in each electoral district is elected to the Board of Supervisors. In May 2026, the City of Pasco was annexed into Franklin Conservation District, creating a need to revise the electoral districts to ensure representation for residents of the City of Pasco among the elected supervisors on the Board of Supervisors. Franklin Conservation District, pursuant to RCW 89.08.190, requests approval of their newly proposed electoral district boundaries.

Requested Action:

I formally request, on behalf of the Franklin Conservation District, that the Commission approves the revision of Franklin Conservation District's electoral boundaries to utilize the Franklin County USDA-Farm Service Agency's three Local Administrative Areas, which include the City of Pasco.

Background and Discussion:

Historically, Franklin Conservation District has been divided into three electoral districts to ensure that all parts of the district receive representation on the board of supervisors. As per RCW 89.08.190, "an alternate method of dividing the district into three zones may be used when requested by the board of supervisors and approved by the commission."

In May 2026, SCC approved the annexation of the City of Pasco into Franklin Conservation District. This action created the need to revise Franklin Conservation District's existing electoral districts to add the City of Pasco, ensuring that registered voters within the City of Pasco will be eligible to vote in Franklin Conservation District's supervisor elections.

The USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA) has divided Franklin County into three Local Administrative Areas (LAA) for the purpose of electing members to the FSA County Committee. The three LAA for Franklin County can be viewed using the USDA-FSA interactive map: ***Find Your Local Administrative Area***

At their August 24, 2026, meeting, the Franklin Conservation District Board of Supervisors voted to adopt the Franklin County USDA-FSA Local Administrative Areas as the electoral boundaries for their conservation district supervisor elections. This action retains three electoral districts within the conservation district, while adding the City of Pasco to an electoral district to ensure that the residents of Pasco are represented on the conservation district board of supervisors and that their registered voters are eligible to vote in supervisor elections. The proposed Franklin Conservation District electoral boundary map is attached to this memo.

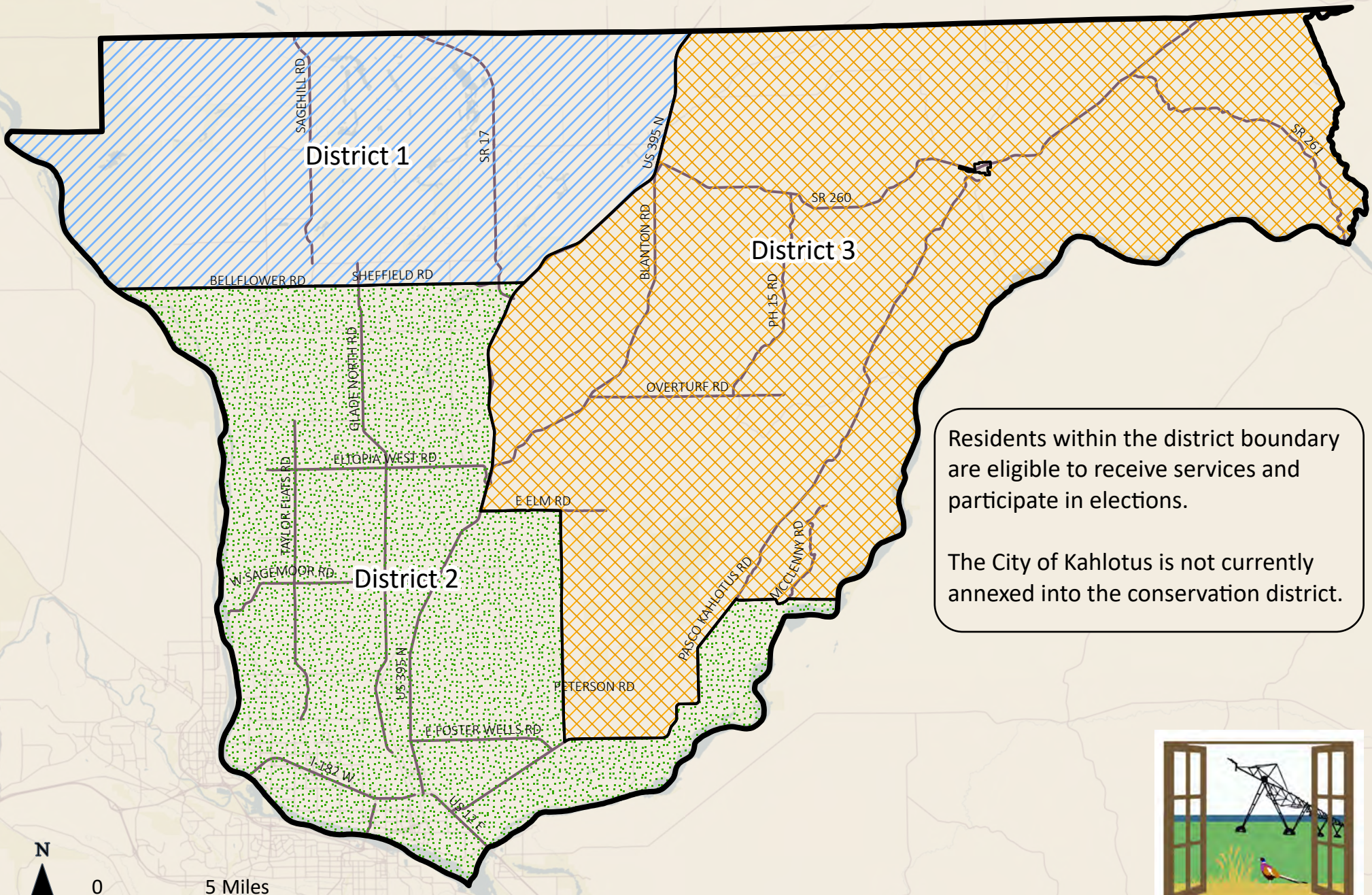
Utilizing the Franklin County USDA-FSA's established LAA map, which has already been vetted, ensures equitable representation of both producers and residents within the Franklin Conservation District.

Staff Contact:

Allisa Carlson, **acarlson@scc.wa.gov**, 360.480.6686
Tami Stubbs, **tstubbs@scc.wa.gov**, 564.250.0980

Franklin Conservation District Elections Map

Effective January 1, 2027



Residents within the district boundary are eligible to receive services and participate in elections.

The City of Kahlotus is not currently annexed into the conservation district.

FRANKLIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Washington State Conservation Commission

December 3, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: SCC Commissioner Nomination Committee

SUBJECT: Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

Action Item	X
Informational Item	

Summary:

At the September 2026 Commission meeting, the Commission formed a Nomination Committee to recommend candidates for the positions of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, in accordance with SCC Policy 21-07 *Governance: Commissioner Expectations.*

The Nomination Committee has since met and will provide its recommendations for the next Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson at this meeting. Policy 21-07 specifies the procedures for nomination and election of officers, including eligibility criteria and terms of service.

A copy of Policy 21-07 is followed by this memo.

SCC Policy 21-07 *Governance: Commissioner Expectations* outlines the process for electing Commission leadership.

Per page 4 of the policy:

- A nominating committee of three Commissioners is formed annually at the September regular Commission meeting for the purpose of recommending candidates for Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.
- The nominating committee presents its recommendations at the next regular meeting for Commission action.
- Only the three elected, two appointed, and the ex-officio member representing Washington State University (WSU) are eligible to serve as Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson.
- Ex-officio members representing the Departments of Ecology, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and WACD are ineligible to serve in these roles.

- The term of office for both Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson is one year, with a maximum of two consecutive terms in each role.

The Nomination Committee has completed its work and will present their recommendation at this meeting for consideration by the full Commission.

Requested Action:

The Commission is requested to discuss the Nomination Committee's recommendation, then take formal action to elect the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for a one-year term beginning at the next regular Commission meeting at the January 21, 2027, SCC regular business meeting, consistent with SCC Policy 21-07.

Commissioner Brook Beeler **brook.beeler@ecy.wa.gov**

Washington State Conservation Commission

December 3, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Chief Financial Officer

SUBJECT: Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual Update

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Action Item	
Informational Item	x

Summary:

The Ombuds Working Group have been working throughout the year to address over 500 comments received in 2025 on the Grant and Contracts Policy Manual. The Ombuds Working Group has provided recommendations to address comments across all 39 topic areas. SCC staff is presenting final engagement outcomes and a timeline of anticipated next steps to reach final adoption in May 2027.

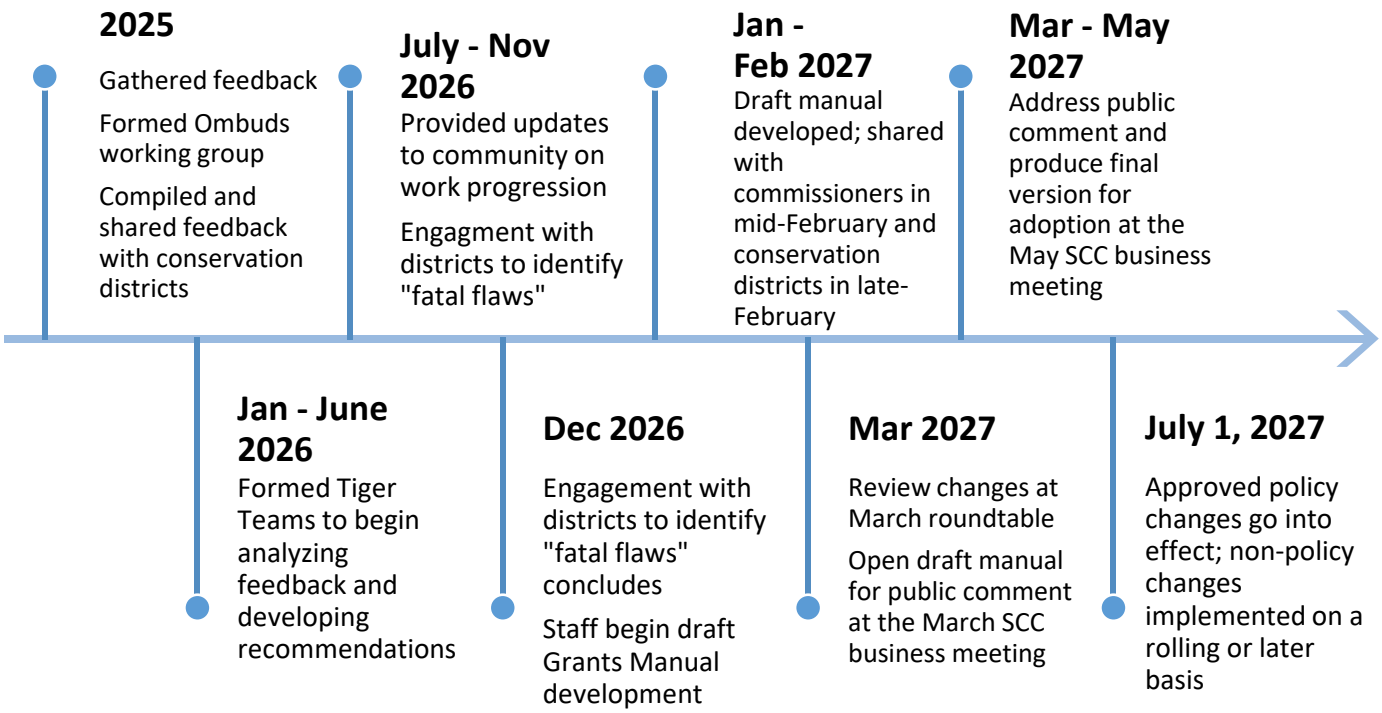
Background and Discussion:

The goal of this collaborative effort is to address all comments received and develop a Grants Manual that is clear, helpful, and strengthens the overall grants and contracts administrative process.

Between August and November 2026, SCC staff rolled out three batches of recommendations to conservation districts and staff to review and provide fatal flaws feedback. Updates were provided via email and at roundtables in September, October, and November 2026.

Fatal flaws feedback was very minimal in nature. The Ombuds Working Group reviewed that feedback and made adjustments to their completed recommendations which are now advancing in a draft Grants Manual.

Project timeline



Next Steps

Staff will incorporate recommendations to the fullest extent possible into a revised Grants Manual draft for Commissioners to review, potentially modify, and approve for public comment.

Washington State Conservation Commission

December 3, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Chief Financial Officer

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year End 26 and Returned Funds

Action Item	
Informational Item	X

Summary:

This last fiscal year, SCC spent 99.02% of the allotted general fund state funding this is less than what we have returned in the past.

Overall, SCC returned just .08% of our general fund state. We will continue to closely monitor all fund sources to ensure appropriate and timely spending is occurring.

Closing out the fiscal year creates a significant lift in workload for the SCC finance staff. In the last 3 months, SCC finance staff processed over 890 vouchers totaling over $12,606,407 in reimbursements to conservation districts, counties, and contractors between June 1, 2026 and August 31, 2026. This represents a 10.29% increase in the number of vouchers and a 4.2% increase in the amount of reimbursements over the same period of time last biennium.

Next Steps:

SCC financial staff will continue to closely monitor all budgets and appropriations and will continue to provide reports and updates to support Regional Managers, Program Managers, the Executive Director and other staff to ensure we use the funding in accordance with state laws, federal laws, and programmatic guidelines.

Staff Contact:

Sarah Groth, Chief Financial Officer, **sgroth@scc.wa.gov** / 360-790-3501

Washington State Conservation Commission

December 3, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Brian Cochrane, Habitat and Monitoring Coordinator

SUBJECT: Modification of CREP Dis-enrolled Contract Assistance Guidelines to extend completion date.

Action Item	X
Informational Item	

Summary:

Staff request to extend the CREP Dis-enrolled Assistance guidelines completion date from June 30, 2026, to June 30, 2027, to allow districts to complete field assessments and submissions for CREP Dis-enrolled Assistance funds. The 2025 federal government shutdown, local workload priorities, and non-responsive landowners have created a need to extend the allowed time.

Requested Action:

Staff request the Commission amend the completion date in the CREP Dis-enrolled Assistance Guidelines from June 30, 2026 to June 30, 2027.

Background and Discussion:

CREP in Washington is intended to alleviate some of agriculture-related impacts on water quality and salmon habitat. USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is the program lead. The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) provides a portion of cost share, maintenance, and technical assistance, leveraged with signing incentives, cost share, and annual rental payments provided by FSA, as authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985.

An audit by FSA between May 2023 and October 2025 resulted in FSA canceling or reducing some contracts. The 2024 Washington State supplemental capital budget authorized SCC via budget proviso to compensate contract holders for an additional year of lost rent, even though FSA may no longer hold a contract. The proviso funding was provided solely to provide assistance to Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) participants that had acres reduced or voluntarily cancelled due to the FSA audit conducted from May 2023 through October 2025.

To date, the CREP Dis-enrolled Assistance payments have been made to 539 participants with missed payments totaling $1,265,837.

The guidelines included a deadline of June 30, 2026. Due to the federal government shut-down, districts were not able to proceed until December of 2025 and some districts were not able to complete the work by the deadline. As of this memo, Skagit Conservation District has requested additional time to contact two participants with a combined award of $1,528.10. Walla Walla County Conservation District has requested more time as they have up to $220,955.18 to award to 92 participants.

The Commission approved opening a public comment period at their September 2026 meeting. Public comment closed on November 15 with only one comment submitted. One comment, not relevant to the proposed change, was received.

Recommended Action and Options:

Staff request the Commission amends the CREP Guidelines Addendum for Dis-enrollment Assistance completion date from June 30, 2026 to June 30, 2027.

Staff Contact:

Brian Cochrane
Habitat and Monitoring Coordinator
(360) 701-5749
bcochrane@scc.wa.gov

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Disenrolled Contract Assistance Guidelines

Approved December 3, 2026

1. Addendum Background

CREP in Washington is intended to alleviate some of agriculture-related impacts on water quality and salmon habitat. USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is the program lead. The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) provides a portion of cost share, maintenance, and technical assistance, leveraged with signing incentives, cost share, and annual rental payments provided by FSA, as authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985.

An audit by FSA between May 2023 and October 2024 resulted in many participants having their contracts cancelled by FSA due to ineligibility, their annual rental payment acres reduced or participants were offered a choice to voluntarily opt out of the program entirely. SCC obtained proviso language in the 2024 Legislative session that allows SCC to compensate contract holders an additional year of lost rent, even though FSA may no longer hold a contract. The proviso funding is provided solely to provide assistance to Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) participants that had acres reduced or voluntarily cancelled due to FSA audit conducted May 2023 – October 2024.

Assistance is limited to:

- One-time payment for one year's lost FSA contract annual rental payment,

2. Addendum Rules

Eligibility

- Participant must have been a CREP participant with FSA during May 2023 – October 2024
- Participants must be included in FSA documentation provided to SCC showing voluntary reduction in acres or termination of contract or involuntary cancellation due to eligibility issues. Contracts involuntarily cancelled (cancelled by FSA) due to compliance issues or non-responsiveness are not eligible.
- .
- Buffers must provide riparian habitat or hydrologically connected wetland enhancements in salmon-bearing streams as determined by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife

-

Eligible Costs

- One-time annual rent payment. One-time payment in the amount of one year's lost rental payment for existing contracts that had reduced acres due to the audit or for previous contracts that were voluntarily cancelled by the participants as a result of the FSA audit.

Ineligible costs

- Maintenance costs
- Education and outreach
- Training
- Equipment
- Overhead
- CREP TA
- Field crews used for maintenance and cost share implementation except in accordance with CREP maintenance policy
- Materials/supplies
- Equipment and supplies for implementation and maintenance
- Travel

For a full overview of the programmatic rules and step by step instructions view the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Conservation District Implementation Guide.

3. Cost Share Policy

- Maximum cost share **per** landowner **per** fiscal year across all SCC programs is $100,000.
- All BMP practices must meet NRCS standards and specifications.

4. Funding Criteria

Required

- All proposed practices must be entered in the CPDS, and a new funding type "CREP Disenrolled Contract Assistance" selected in the funding grid.
- The funding is granted on a one-time basis (upon approval - June 30,2027) therefore, all costs must be incurred by June 30, 2027. The proviso is for contracts that expired within a specific time frame and therefore costs must be incurred by the end of FY27; unused funds must be returned.
- Returning Funds-
    - Please submit a Returned Funds form

5. Funding Process

Application shall be made via CPDS on the existing project funding tab. For lost rental payments, a new funding program called CREP Disenrolled Contract Assistance will be

selected.

- Update the contract number to match FSA number in CPDS (required).
- “CREP Disenrolled Contract Assistance” will be added to existing program drop-down and will be selected to add to the project funding grid.
- CREP Disenrolled Contract Assistance will trigger the “Submit Auth” button consistent with other CREP program funding requests.
- CREP Disenrolled Contract Assistance funding request will then be submitted for approval consistent with existing request format.
- Notes in the funding request must include the site assessment form score and the form must be uploaded to CPDS.

Supporting documentation for award:

- Completed site assessment form uploaded to CPDS
  Participant record of cancellation/acreage reduction and amount of rental payment reduced uploaded to CPDS if available.

6. Vouchering Process:

Monthly grant vouchers are required.

Supporting documentation for vouchers:

- Copy of the issued check to the landowner
  - Refer to the Grant and Contract Procedure Manual for vouchering and cost share rules.

Full text of the proviso language:

Sec. 3015. 2023 c 474 s 3080 (uncodified) is amended to read as follows:

FOR THE STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

2023-25 Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

(40000023)

The appropriations in this section are subject to the following conditions and limitations: The state conservation commission may expend the state building construction account and natural climate solutions account —state appropriation in this section as grants to private land owners who were enrolled in the conservation reserve enhancement program, and whose acreage meets state program goals of providing riparian habitat or hydrologically connected wetland enhancements in salmon-bearing streams as determined by the Washington state department of fish and wildlife, but are now disenrolled due to a contract termination by the United States department of agriculture (USDA) farm service agency, or who voluntary terminated their enrollment as a result of the USDA farm service agency audit.

Page	Section	Existing Policy	Proposed Update	Rationale
2	4	The funding is granted on a one-time basis (upon approval - June 30, 2026) therefore, all costs must be incurred by June 30, 2026. The proviso is for contracts that expired within a specific time frame and therefore costs must be incurred by the end of FY26; unused funds must be returned.	The funding is granted on a one-time basis (upon approval - June 30, 2027) therefore, all costs must be incurred by June 30, 2027. The proviso is for contracts that expired within a specific time frame and therefore costs must be incurred by the end of FY27; unused funds must be returned.	An initial deadline was inserted in the guidelines of June 30, 2026, to provide a timely response to landowners that would not have received the amounts from FSA the previous October (at the end of the federal fiscal year). Due to the federal government shut-down, districts were not able to proceed until December of 2025. In spite of written and oral guidance, some districts were not able to complete the work by the June 30, 2026, guideline date.

Commentor	Page	Section	Comment	Response
evan@masoncd.org	na	na	Mason CD does not intend to suggest CREP as a viable program moving forward. FSA has always been very unorganized, behind the times, and difficult to work with. After the audits and contract changes, we will not be suggesting this program to any landowners.	The Commission approved opening a public comment period at their September 2026 meeting. Public comment closed on November 15 with only one comment submitted. One comment, not relevant to the proposed change, was received.

Washington State Conservation Commission

December 3, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, Executive Director

FROM: Brian Cochrane, Habitat and Monitoring Coordinator

SUBJECT: CREP Manual changes

Action Item	X
Informational Item	

Summary:

CREP Programmatic Guidelines are revised to incorporate minor changes and fit a new format.

Requested Action:

Staff seek approval to open a 30-day public comment period.

Staff Contact:

Brian Cochrane, Habitat and Monitoring Coordinator, **bcochrane@scc.wa.gov**

Background and Discussion:

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in Washington is intended to alleviate some of the agriculture-related impacts on water quality and salmon habitat. USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is the program lead. The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) provides a portion of cost share, maintenance, and technical assistance (TA), leveraged with signing incentives, cost share, and annual rental payments provided by FSA, as authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985.

Program guidelines were last updated on October 31, 2025. Minor edits include identifying cultural resources funding as a separate funding source. It was previously captured under TA as a conditional allowed expense. Policy for requesting funds remains the same. A second minor update was the inclusion of travel to and from project sites as an allowed TA expense. This was previously not identified. Lastly, the format has been changed to the program manual format. The previous guidelines contained a mixture of policy and procedure. The term “guidelines” was confusing and could be interpreted as “best practice” and not as containing mandatory requirements. The manual

format focuses on policy only. Procedural elements, subject to changes through time, have been removed and will be captured in separate program reference materials.

Recommended Action:

Direct staff to open the CREP Program Manual for public comment. Staff would then present a final program manual for Commission consideration at the March 2027 meeting.



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Manual

DRAFT

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Section 1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Program Overview

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in Washington state is a joint federal and state-funded program that restores and protects streamside habitat for salmon. The program's purpose is to assist in the recovery of salmon species that have been listed as threatened or endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act. Agricultural activities in riparian corridors, along with agriculture-related impacts on water quality, have contributed to habitat loss of these cold-water fish species in Washington. CREP projects are administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) through contracts with individual landowners.

1.2 Program Authority

CREP is authorized by agreement between the Commodity Credit Corporation and State of Washington Governor's office. The original program agreement was signed October 19, 1998.

1.3 Glossary of Terms

See **grants and contract manual** for definitions.

1.4 Program Components

1.4.1 Cost Share

Cost share is a portion of any implementation cost approved by FSA in the Conservation Plan, maintenance paid by SCC for five years following installation, a portion of mid-contract management activities identified in the Conservation Plan, approved beaver management activities during the life of the contract, and approved contingencies.

1.4.2 Technical Assistance

Technical assistance covers staff effort needed to develop and manage a project from initial landowner interest through the end of the landowner CREP contract.

1.4.3 Cultural Resources

CREP cultural resources funding is available to cover cultural resources compliance costs when FSA cannot or when FSA has notified the applicant that additional cultural resources activities are required based on feedback from the cultural resources review conducted by FSA.

1.4.4 Practice Incentive Payment loan (PIP loan)

Practice Incentive Payments (PIP) are 40% of project implementation paid by FSA after all practices are installed and completed. PIP loans are an advanced payment structure offered by SCC for certain expenditures when extenuating circumstances represent a financial burden to landowners.

Section 2. General Policies

2.1 Grants and Contracts Manual Guidance

Unless an exception is explicitly stated in this Manual, all policies established in **SCC's Grant and Contract Policy Manual** must be followed in implementation of CREP awards.

CREP recipients are required to follow the FSA process for cultural resources review. If FSA determines that pre-project survey or on-site observation is required, conservation districts may request cultural resources funding and must follow procurement laws.

2.2 Reporting Requirements

Depending on the appropriation in any given year, CREP may have additional reporting requirements (e.g. Climate Commitment Act reporting requirements). Reporting requirements will be included in the award notification or in program communications.

Section 3. Eligibility

3.1 General Eligibility

Overall program rules for participants are identified in **FSA's 2-CRP Handbook** and amendments. Participants must meet FSA eligibility requirements. Lands offered under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) must meet FSA requirements for cropping history or marginal pasture and location along **a mapped CREP stream**. Participants must enter into a contract with FSA that includes a riparian plan, approved costs and obligations.

3.2 CREP Cost Share

All best management practices (BMPs) must be approved by FSA and are subject to state or local FSA cost limitations.

3.2.1 Eligible Expenditures

- Project installation cost share, 10% of FSA approved costs
- Project maintenance, up to $2700 per acre for up to five years (if needed) from date of first planting in accordance with the **CREP Maintenance Policy**.
- Mid-contract management cost share, 50% of FSA-approved activities at FSA hold-down rates.
- Re-enrollment cost share, 50% of FSA-approved costs.

3.2.1 Conditional Expenditures

- Beaver management, 100% at any time during the contract, with an approved beaver management plan as identified in the **CREP Maintenance Policy**.
- Contingency, up to 100% for one-time costs to protect the CREP investment provided the need is due to unforeseen events and not due to a lack of landowner maintenance, conditionally allowed with prior approval from the CREP program manager.

3.2.2 Ineligible Expenditures

Any expenditures not explicitly included in the "eligible expenditures" or "conditionally eligible expenditures" sections above are considered ineligible. Refer to **SCC's Grant and Contract Policy Manual** for common ineligible expenditures.

Additionally, the following costs are explicitly not allowed in CREP:

3.2.2.1 Costs not approved by FSA on form 848B:

- Maintenance costs in excess of those described in the CREP Maintenance Policy
- Education and outreach
- Training
- Equipment
- Overhead

3.3 CREP Technical Assistance

3.3.1 Eligible Expenditures

Staff time for the following activities is considered an eligible expense:

- Recruiting landowners
- Conducting outreach
- Evaluating and documenting site conditions for program requirements
- Working with participants and FSA to navigate the enrollment process
- Conducting site assessments for plan preparation
- Completing conservation plans and FSA or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) forms for submission with the FSA contract
- Presenting plans to NRCS and the FSA County Committees
- Addressing endangered species issues with FSA and US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Assisting participants with selection of contractors, plant materials and implementation
- Preparing and obtaining landowner agreements
- Overseeing maintenance needs and funding
- Coordinating mid-contract management
- Developing and implementing beaver management plans
- Coordinating re-enrollment with landowners and FSA
- Traveling to and from CREP project sites
- Overhead expenses

3.3.2 Conditional Expenditures

Travel and expenses for CREP specific trainings and regional or statewide meetings may be eligible with prior approval from the CREP program manager.

3.3.3 Ineligible Expenditures

- Field crews used for maintenance and cost-share implementation
- Materials/supplies in excess of $1000
- Equipment and supplies for implementation and maintenance
- Travel for training or conferences

3.4 CREP Cultural Resources

3.4.1 Eligible Expenditures

- Pre-project cultural resources surveys
- On-site cultural observation during project implementation
- All cultural resource requests must be supported by documentation from FSA that the activity is required to move the project forward.

3.4.2 Ineligible Expenditures

Cultural coordination costs are not eligible as all coordination is conducted by FSA.

3.5 Practice Incentive Payment Loan

Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) loans are an advanced payment structure for certain expenditures related to CREP Cost-share projects and adhere to the same eligible, ineligible, and conditionally eligible expenditures as listed above in Section 3.2. See the **CREP PIP policy** for details.

Section 4. Application Process and Timeline

CREP is based on continuous enrollment by FSA. FSA may restrict application windows to accommodate Federal program acreage limits or fiscal year requirements. **The full step-by-step process is found here**. See paragraph 171 of the **FSA's 2-CRP Handbook** for an overall description of the CREP sign-up process.

Section 5. Program Specific Policies

Supervisors, Associate Supervisors and conservation district employees are not eligible for CREP unless the contract is managed and state cost share and maintenance funding is administered by a neighboring conservation district.

Section 6. Budget and Financial Information

6.1 Budget template

See **CREP Program Procedures.**

6.2 Reimbursements

See **SCC's Grant and Contract Policy Manual**.

6.3 Vouchering

See **SCC's Grant and Contract Policy Manual**.

Section 7. Reporting, Monitoring, and Close Out Requirements

7.1 Program Specific Close out requirements

BMP status is maintained as "funded" for the life of the FSA contract. Upon dis-enrollment from the program, BMP status shall be updated to "completed" and the contract expiration date updated to reflect the actual contract end date.

CREP Content Change Log

Updated 11-13-2026

Page	Section	Proposed Content Change	Rationale
1	General Policies	Adds CREP Cultural Resources as a separate type of funding available. Retains limits and conditions in previous guidance document.	In previous guidelines, cultural resources was an eligible expense, however was not identified as a separate funding source. This update separates cultural resources and associated policy to align the manual description of cultural resources with SCC accounting practices.
2	Eligibility	CREP Cultural Resources removed from conditional costs under cost share	In previous guidelines, cultural resources was an eligible expense, however was not identified as a separate funding source. This update separates cultural resources and associated policy to align the manual description of cultural resources with SCC accounting practices.
3	Eligibility	Adds travel to and from CREP project sites as an eligible CREP TA expense	Travel to and from field sites was not an approved expense in previous guidelines. Travel is an eligible expense, this was just an oversight in having it listed in the previous guidelines.
3	Eligibility	TA expenses for travel and time to attend program-specific regional or statewide training added as a Conditionally Allowed expense.	Previous guideance was silent on program-specific training/meeting attendance
3	Eligibility	Travel and training for general (not program specific) conferences are no longer allowed expenses.	Previous guidance had a tiered, preference allowance for training to attend conferences. In reality, most riparian conferences have far broader value than just CREP and are not project-related costs.
4	Application Process and Timeline	Added language to describe continuous enrollment under FSA.	Previous guidelines briefly described application process.
5	Reporting, Monitoring, and Close Out Requirements	Added language to describe BMP status and contract end dates as part of closeout	BMP status and contract information is critical to understand which projects are currently under contract and active participants in the program.
all	all	Change from guidance manual format to standardized Program Manual format	Guidance manual format varied between programs, mixed policy with procedure and was taken as guidance, not requirements. The program manual format only contains policy.
all	all	Removed references about procedure and CPDS (except as needed to describe closeout and reporting)	Previous guideance mixed policy and procedure

Washington State Conservation Commission

December 3, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Karen Hills, SFF Program Manager

SUBJECT: Sustainable Farms and Fields Program Manual

Action Item	X
Informational Item	

Summary:

SCC staff are recommending some adjustments to the Sustainable Farms and Fields program manual to improve implementation of the program.

Requested Action :

Staff recommends that the Commission opens the 30-day public comment period for the Sustainable Farms and Fields program manual effective immediately.

Background and Discussion:

Over the past five fiscal years of implementation of SFF, it's become clear that some changes to program policy are needed to improve implementation. In addition, existing policy is being moved into a standardized Program Manual template.

During September and October 2026, SCC staff developed manual updates by working closely with the conservation district working group and members of the SFF Technical Advisory and Review Committee. The SFF Technical Advisory and Review Committee consists of representatives from WSDA, WSU, NRCS, and WDFW and serves in an advisory role on program development and application prioritization. *SCC, in consultation with WSDA, WSU, NRCS, and WDFW will prioritize grant applications based on established scoring metrics*. (RCW 89.08.620)

The feedback received during the 30-day comment period will be presented to the Commission during a future meeting and approved updates will take effect for the upcoming application period in spring 2027 for fiscal year 2028 funding.

Content changes

Numerous content changes (outlined in the change log) were made to add clarity, eliminate redundancy with the Grants and Contracts Manual and remove procedure items that will be moved to the Program Procedures document. All policy changes are summarized below.

Summary of proposed policy changes

1. Remove Language on Payment for Carbon Storage

Wording exists in the current documents that reflects potential uses of SFF funding to pay for carbon storage. While this is an allowable use of SFF funds in statute, it does not reflect the way that the program has been implemented, and SCC currently has no plans to develop this part of the program. SCC proposes removing any reference to payment for carbon storage and development of a Measurement and Estimation Verification system.

2. Create Separate Funding Track for Outreach, Planning, and Design Only Projects with Allocation of 30% of Total Available Funds

Due to decreased total appropriation for SFF and sustained requests for outreach, planning, and design only projects (no BMP implementation), there has been a significant percentage of SFF applications submitted for outreach, planning, and design only projects. Currently these projects compete in the same pool as other project types, even though scoring is significantly different. To meet the legislative intent of SFF, the program will allocate a percentage of total available SFF funding for grant awards towards outreach, planning, and design only projects.

The commission shall develop and approve a prioritization metric to guide the distribution of funds appropriated by the legislature for this purpose, with the goal of producing cost-effective carbon dioxide equivalent impact benefits. (RCW 89.08.620(3))

Since SFF has been awarding grants the percentage of funding allocated to Technical Assistance (TA) only projects as a percentage of the total has varied from 12% (FY23) to 29% (FY27).

The conservation district working group aligned, generally, on the need to allocate funding for projects that don't implement BMPs. When six participants from the conservation district working group were surveyed on an appropriate percentage of total funding for SCC to allocate for projects that don't implement best management practices, three people responded "depends on total funding amount," one responded "50%" and two responded "25%."

Using a percentage of total funding available for grant awards rather than a dollar amount will improve durability of this change. Given the information above, SCC staff recommends that 30% of total funding available for grants be allocated toward outreach, planning, and design only projects.

3. Revise Scoring Rubric

An application scoring rubric was developed for SFF prior to a model existing within SCC for scoring competitive grants. As a result, the scoring rubric in its current form isn't consistent with the SCC model and will be adapted to be consistent with the SCC model that has different scoring criteria for implementation and outreach, planning, and design only projects. These two scoring rubrics will be presented in more detail in the revised SFF program procedures document.

Current rubric:

Project Type	Technical Assistance	Cost Share	Materials & Supplies	Equipment Sharing	Demo
Potential of the proposed projects to increase carbon sequestration and reduce carbon dioxide equivalent emissions (e.g., using COMET Planner, COMET Farm, NRCS Qualitative Ranking)	-	5	5	5	5
Creation of riparian buffers/fish habitat	-	1	1	-	1
Creation of pollinator habitat	-	1	1	-	1
Partnerships/collaboration	2	2	2	2	4
Benefit to multiple land owners/ managers	2	2	2	2	2
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	2	2	2	2	2
Completeness of application materials submitted	2	2	2	2	2
Fits within program priorities	2	2	2	2	2
Clearly demonstrates or describes ability to complete project (including expanding existing project, having producers identified prior to application, achievable timeline for project completion)	6	6	6	6	6
Total Possible Score*	16	23	23	21	25

*Note that projects will be compared across categories by considering the score received as a percentage of total maximum possible score.

In addition to considering the above metrics, the selection committee may seek to distribute funding based on categories: geography, land use type/commodity type served, farm size served. The selection committee may choose to award extra points to applicants (CDs and other public entities) as well as to applications including land owners/managers that have not previously been awarded SFF funding.

Proposed new rubric:

Criterion	Definition	Outreach, Planning & Design Only	Implementation
Natural Resource Impact *(including CO2eq impact; fish and pollinator habitat creation)*	The magnitude, quality, and durability of direct and indirect benefits to natural resources and ecosystems resulting from the project or program.		30%
Ability to Deliver	The degree to which the applicant and its partners can execute the proposed work to expected standards, meet grant requirements, and complete the project within a realistic schedule.	35%	25%
Costs & Budget	The appropriateness, completeness, and place-based cost-effectiveness of the project or program budget, including alignment with the work, match requirements, or long-term financial sustainability.	10%	10%
Community Priorities	The extent to which the project or program reflects and advances locally identified priorities, needs, and relationships within the communities it affects or serves.	15%	10%
Maximizing Impact	The extent to which the project or program increases overall impact by connecting with other efforts, leveraging additional resources, and contributing to larger-scale or longer-term outcomes.	25%	15%
Expanding Reach	The extent to which the project or program broadens who and where the program serves, including new geographies, sectors, operation types, and historically underfunded or underserved recipients.	15%	10%
		100%	**100%**

In addition to considering the above metrics, the selection committee may seek to distribute funding based on categories: geography, land use type/commodity type served, farm size served. The selection committee may choose to award extra points to applicants (CDs and other public entities) as well as to applications including landowners/managers that have not previously been awarded SFF funding.

4. Add Limits to Funding Request Amount per Application (by Application Type)

Staff recommends imposing limits on funding request amount per application by funding track for more alignment with funding amounts. This allows spreading funds based on statutory language. Proposed limits for requests: $15,000 for outreach, planning and design only applications; $40,000 for implementation applications.

The CD workgroup participants generally agreed that a $40,000 or $50,000 request limit for implementation applications was reasonable and large enough to complete many types of projects. The proposal of a $15,000 limit for outreach, planning, and design only applications is consistent with the limit implemented for this project type in fiscal year 2027, thus represents moving something into policy that has previously been implemented when the application is released. This change will help provide this information well ahead of the application window. At the current appropriation level, this limit would allow 11-12 successful outreach, planning, and design only applicants to be funded at $15,000 per fiscal year, consistent with the 5-12 applicants funded yearly during fiscal years 2023-2027.

5. Add a Limit to the Applications Submitted by one applicant

The goal of this effort is to reduce review burden and encourage internal prioritization, by imposing limits on number of applications that an applicant may submit per fiscal year (by funding track). Staff recommend a limiting submission to three implementation applications and one outreach, planning, and design only application per applicant per fiscal year. This change may require an applicant to prioritize potential applications prior to submitting them to SCC.

6. Add Eligible or Conditionally Eligible Expenditure Categories

The items in bold below have been added in response to requests from conservation district staff:

Eligible Expenditures

- **PPE as needed for activities in approved scope of work**
- Cost share and District Implemented Projects (DIPs)
- Salaries and benefits
- Overhead
- Outreach and education
- In-state travel
- Goods and services (e.g. outreach materials, soil sampling, contractor services (appraisers, engineers, permitting etc.))

Conditionally Eligible Expenditures (expense categories that are ineligible unless explicitly approved by the Sustainable Farms and Fields program manager in advance*)

- **Out of state/country travel**
- Equipment (including trailer for shared equipment) - approval needed for single purchase over $2,000
- **Staff training specific to scope of work / related to SFF eligible practices**
- **Honoraria/stipends/speaker fees/speaker travel – as necessary to complete activities in approved scope of work**

Recommended Action and Options:

Option 1: Commission approval to release the draft Sustainable Farms and Fields program manual for 30-day review and comment period, effective immediately.

Draft motion language: I move to release the draft Sustainable Farms and Fields Program manual as presented for the 30-day review and public comment period.

Staff Contact:

Karen Hills, SFF Program Manager (**khills@scc.wa.gov**, 564-669-3292)

Sustainable Farms and Fields Program Manual

DRAFT

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Section 1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Program Overview

The Sustainable Farms and Fields (SFF) grant program was established in statute during the 2020 legislative session with strong bipartisan support, and support from a wide range of stakeholders. The goal of the program is to increase the implementation of climate-smart practices to increase carbon sequestration and reduce carbon dioxide equivalent (greenhouse gases, GHG) emissions on farmland, rangeland, and tidelands in Washington through voluntary incentives. Not only do these practices help mitigate the global impacts of climate change, they increase resiliency to drought, flooding, and other environmental stressors related to climate change. The numerous co-benefits of these practices include improved air and water quality, and increased habitat for wildlife, pollinators, and fish. Implementation of precision agriculture can reduce fossil fuel consumption, further reducing GHG emissions. Moreover, these climate-smart practices help producers save money in their farming operations.

1.2 Legislative Intent

The Sustainable Farms and Fields grant program is established under **RCW 89.08.610 through 89.08.635**. Since 2020, SFF has received funding via the Washington state operating budget.

1.2.1 The intent of the 2020 Sustainable Farms and Fields legislation:

Findings—Intent—2020 c 351:
"The legislature finds that Washington's working agricultural lands are essential to the economic and social well-being of our rural communities and to the state's overall environment and economy. The legislature further finds that different challenges and opportunities exist to expand the use of precision agriculture for different crops in the state by assisting farmers, ranchers, and aquaculturists in purchasing equipment and receiving technical assistance to reduce their operations' carbon footprint while ensuring that crops and soils receive exactly what they need for optimum health and productivity. Moreover, the legislature finds that opportunities exist to enhance soil health through carbon farming and regenerative agriculture by increasing soil organic carbon levels while ensuring appropriate carbon to nitrogen ratios, and storing carbon in standing trees, seaweed, and other vegetation. Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to provide cost-sharing competitive grant opportunities to enable farmers and ranchers to adopt practices that increase appropriate quantities of carbon stored in and above their soil and to initiate or expand the use of precision agriculture on their farms. This act seeks to leverage and enhance existing state and federal cost-sharing programs for farm, ranch, and aquaculture operations."[1]

When prioritizing grant recipients, the commission, in consultation with the department of agriculture, Washington State University, the department of fish and wildlife, and the United States department of agriculture natural resources conservation service, shall seek to maximize the benefits of the grant program by leveraging other state, nonstate, public, and private sources of money.[2]*The primary metrics used to rank grant applications must be made public by the commission.*[3]

[1] RCW 89.08.610

[3] **RCW 89.08.620**

1.3 Glossary of Terms

Terms below are in addition to those defined in the SCC Grant and Contract Policy Manual.

Climate-smart practices means for the purpose of SFF, climate-smart practices are those practices used on agricultural land, rangeland, and tidelands that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or sequester (store) carbon.

Carbon dioxide (CO_2) equivalent emission means a metric measure used to compare the emission impacts from various greenhouse gases based on their relative radiative forcing effect over a specified period of time compared to carbon dioxide emissions (RCW 89.08.610.) In other words, A carbon dioxide equivalent, or CO2eq, is a unit for measuring greenhouse gases. It allows for the comparison between diverse gases like carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.

Carbon dioxide (CO_2) equivalent impact means a metric measure of the cumulative radiative forcing impacts of both carbon dioxide equivalent emissions and the radiative forcing benefits of carbon storage. (RCW 89.08.610). Having a beneficial CO2eq impact means reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions and/or sequestering carbon."

Pollinator habitat means an area of land that is or may be developed as habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honeybees, as determined by the department of agriculture.

Precision agriculture means "a management strategy that gathers, processes and analyzes temporal, spatial and individual data and combines it with other information to support management decisions according to estimated variability for improved resource use efficiency, productivity, quality, profitability and sustainability of agricultural production" (International Society of Precision Agriculture, ISPA). Climate-smart precision agriculture strategies are meant to reduce GHG emissions.

The following definitions of "historically underserved producers" are derived from **7 24 C.F.R. Sec. 1470.3 (2022)** with additional detail where noted provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) **Outreach and Advocacy definition**s.

Beginning farmer or rancher means a person or legal entity who:

1. Has not operated a farm, ranch, or nonindustrial private forestland (NIPF) or who has operated a farm, ranch, or NIPF for not more than 10 consecutive years. The requirement in this paragraph (1) applies to all members of a legal entity who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.
2. In the case of a contract with an individual, individually, or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provides substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch, consistent with the practices in the county or state where the farm is located.
3. In the case of a contract with a legal entity or joint operation, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. Material and substantial participation requires that each of the members provide some amount of the management or labor and management necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if each of the members did not provide these inputs, the operation of the farm or ranch would be seriously impaired.

4. In the case of a contract made with a legal entity, all members must meet these requirements.

Historically underserved producer means a person, joint operation, legal entity, or Indian Tribe who is a beginning farmer or rancher, socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher, limited resource farmer or rancher, or veteran farmer or rancher.

Limited resource farmer or rancher means:

1. A person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two fiscal years (adjusted for inflation using “prices paid” by the Farmer Index as compiled by the National Agricultural Statistical Service); and
2. Has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years (to be determined annually using Department of Commerce data).
3. A limited resource farmer or rancher also includes a legal entity or joint operation if all individual members independently qualify under paragraphs (1) and (2) of this definition.

A self-determination tool is available to the public and may be completed on-line or printed and completed hardcopy at **https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/**.

Socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher means a producer who is a member of a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudices without regard to its members' individual qualities. The USDA NRCS further defines socially disadvantaged as an individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. Socially disadvantaged groups consist of the following:

- American Indians or Alaskan Natives
- Asians
- Blacks or African Americans
- Hispanics
- Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders

For an entity, at least 50 percent ownership in the farm business must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals.

Note: Gender alone is not a covered group for the purposes of NRCS conservation program authorities. The term entities reflect a broad interpretation to include partnerships, couples, legal entities, etc.

Veteran farmer or rancher means a producer who meets the definition in section 2501(a)(7) of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2279). 7.U.S.C. 2279 defines veteran farmer or rancher as a farmer or rancher who has served in the Armed Forces (as defined in SECTION 101(10) OF TITLE 38) and who—

A. has not operated a farm or ranch;
B. has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years; or
C. is a veteran (as defined in section 101 of that title) who has first obtained status as a veteran (as so defined) during the most recent 10-year period.

A legal entity or joint operation can be a Veteran Farmer or Rancher only if all individual members independently qualify.

1.4 Program Components

Sustainable Farms and Fields has two distinct tracks of funding (Outreach, Planning, and Design Only and Implementation), with 30% of total available funding allocated to Outreach, Planning, and Design Only projects and 70% of total available funding allocated to Implementation projects.

- Outreach, Planning, and Design Only – no best management practices implemented
- Implementation – best management practices implemented

Additional details provided in Section 3: Eligible Project Types.

Section 2. General Policies

2.1 Grant and Contract Manual

Unless an exception is explicitly stated in this manual, all policies established in **SCC's Grant and Contract Policy Manual** must be followed in implementation of Sustainable Farms and Fields program awards.

2.2 Cultural Resources Review

The following types of projects do not require a cultural resource review and do not need to fill out a Cultural Resources Complied Statement form (available on **Cultural Resources page** of SCC website).

- Technical assistance-only or outreach-only projects
- Purchase of equipment for lease or sharing
- Purchase of seed, seedlings, or amendments for distribution without a particular site identified.

All other Sustainable Farms and Fields project grant recipients are required to follow the SCC process for cultural resources review. **Download the PDF to learn more about the SCC cultural resources review process.**

2.3 Scope Change and Amendment Policy

See Grant and Contract Manual.

2.4 Additional Requirements

Dependent on the appropriation in any given year, the Sustainable Farms and Fields program may have additional program requirements (e.g. Climate Commitment Act reporting). Any additional requirements will be included in the Invitation to Apply, award notification, or in the program communications.

Section 3. Eligibility

3.1 Eligible Applicants

The Sustainable Farms and Fields program is open to conservation districts and other public entities that possess the expertise to provide technical assistance and/or capacity to implement climate-smart practices:

- Conservation districts
- State Agencies
- Colleges, universities, and extension offices
- Federally recognized Tribes
- Counties
- Cities, towns, and other municipalities
- Special purpose districts

Eligible Lands/Landownership in this context refers to farmland, rangeland, and aquaculture tidelands.

3.2 Eligible Climate Smart Practices

For eligible practices, please refer to the list of SFF approved climate-smart practices: **SFF - Eligible Practices and GHG Tools**. This list will be updated, as needed, by the SFF Technical Advisory and Review Committee and the link to the currently approved practices will be updated before each application window opens. SCC may approve additional practices as deemed appropriate. This list is not exhaustive and will be updated as additions are made to the NRCS list of climate-smart Conservation Practice Standards and SCC list of approved climate-smart practices.

Additional practices may be proposed to the program manager by February 1 to be considered for the list of eligible practices for the next application window.

3.3 Eligible Project Types

The following project types are considered generally eligible for the Sustainable Farms and Fields grant program. Opportunities to seek funding for each project type during a particular funding round may be dependent on available funding.

3.3.1 Outreach, Planning, and Design Only

See Grant and Contract manual for definitions of *outreach*, *planning*, and *design*.

An Outreach, Planning, and Design Only project does *not* involve implementation of best management practices and may include one or more of the project categories below:

3.3.1.1 Planning and Design

Including services to landowner or operators, such as the development of site-specific “carbon farm plans” (i.e., less comprehensive than conservation farm plans) to increase climate-smart practices that increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These practices include but are not limited to those that increase soil organic matter levels, increase usage of precision agricultural practices, and reduce livestock GHG emissions.

3.3.1.2 Outreach
conveying programming information on climate-smart practices and services to targeted landowners and the general public.

3.3.2 Implementation
An Implementation project must involve implementation of climate-smart best management practices and may include one or more of the project categories below:

3.3.2.1 Cost share
For the implementation of climate-smart BMPs, including the purchase of equipment when necessary. Cost-share projects are typically larger in scale and scope than materials and supplies projects.

3.3.2.2 Equipment sharing
Conservation districts, separately or jointly, may apply for grant funds to operate an equipment-sharing program. Conservation districts may also apply for grant funds on behalf of farm, ranch, or aquaculture operations coordinating as individual businesses or as formal cooperative ventures serving farm, ranch, or aquaculture operations to purchase shared equipment.

3.3.2.3 Materials and supplies
Including the purchase of seed, seedlings, spores, animal feed, and amendments for use in implementing climate-smart practices. Materials and supplies projects are intended to involve limited trialing of a practice on a small portion of an operation, implemented with no or minimal TA. For projects of a larger scale, apply for cost share.

3.3.2.4 Demonstration
This type of project utilizes practices that are not commonly used in a specific region or type of operation/site and showcases the applicability of a technique/ technology for natural resources conservation. The BMPs demonstrated must show local land-users how new technology or innovative methods can conserve natural resources. New and innovative practices include entirely new technologies that have not been utilized on a widespread basis, and those that have yet to be adopted in a regional or operational context. A demonstration project may pay up to 100% for such practices on private or public land, regardless of the district approved cost share rate, on a one- time basis. A demonstration project must be pre-approved by SFF Program Manager.

An applicant may apply for SFF funds to demonstrate the use of new or innovative climate-smart technologies and/or practices to local producers.

SFF Demonstration projects can be one of two types:

1. Type A demonstration projects showcase a practice eligible through SFF that is not commonly used in an area and must include an outreach component.
2. Type B demonstration projects are used to gather more information about the feasibility and impact of a practice that is not yet eligible but shows promise as a climate-smart practice.

3.4 Ineligible Project Types

Any project types not explicitly included in the “eligible project types” section above are considered ineligible unless prior written approval is provided by the grant program manager.

3.5 Expenditures

3.5.1 Eligible Expenditures

- PPE as needed for activities in approved scope of work
- Cost share and District-Implemented Projects (DIPs)
- Salaries and benefits
- Overhead
- Outreach and education
- In-state travel
- Goods and services (e.g. outreach materials, soil sampling, contractor services (appraisers, engineers, permitting etc.))

3.5.2 Conditionally Eligible Expenditures

Expense categories that are ineligible unless explicitly approved by the Sustainable Farms and Fields program manager in advance[4]*

- Out of state/country travel
- Equipment (including trailer for shared equipment) - approval needed for a single purchase over $2,000
- Staff training specific to scope of work / related to SFF eligible practices
- Honoraria/stipends/speaker fees/speaker travel – as necessary to complete activities in approved scope of work
- Speakers at workshops cannot self-promote their own company or products.

3.5.3 Ineligible Expenditures

- Vehicles
- Insurance or registration for shared equipment

Any expenditures not explicitly included in the “eligible expenditures” or “conditionally eligible expenditures” sections above are considered ineligible. Refer to Grant and Contract Manual for common ineligible expenditures.

Section 4. Application Process and Timeline

4.1 General grant timelines

Because SFF is funded through the state operating budget, which runs from July 1-June 30, all projects and practices must be completed no later than June 30 of each year.

Materials purchased for distribution to producers for implementation of climate-smart practices (e.g., cover crop seed) must be received by the applicant and the BMP must be implemented by June 30. The exception to this requirement is for small amounts (e.g., seed packets) distributed for planting without a specific location identified (for example, as part of an outreach event).

SCC will announce the opportunities to apply to the Sustainable Farms and Fields program in an application packet. The application packet will include the Sustainable Farms and Fields program Manual, the Sustainable Farms and Fields program Procedures, and the Invitation to Apply. When able, SCC will publish the application packet in the spring before the start of fiscal year. The application packet will include the following information:

[4] Where expenses were included in an approved budget as part of a funded application, this will be considered a form of prior approval. Where costs were not submitted as part of an approved budget, program manager must approve these expenses prior to spending.

- Application requirements (including budget forms, required attachments/ documentation)
- Application deadline
- Evaluation process
- Scoring criteria
- Funding decision timeline

Depending on funds available, the Sustainable Farms and Fields program may issue more than one Invitation to Apply during the fiscal year.

Section 5. Program Specific Policies

5.1 Prioritization framework

SCC, in consultation with WSDA, WSU, NRCS, and WDFW will prioritize grant applications based on established scoring metrics. RCW 89.08.620

The following items are required by statute to be considered in prioritization:

5.2 Increasing carbon dioxide equivalent impact benefits[5]

Applications will be prioritized based on the ability to increase carbon sequestration and/ or reduce carbon dioxide equivalent emissions through the following activities (RCW 89.08.620(2)):

- Increase the quantity of organic carbon in topsoil through practices including, but not limited to, cover cropping, no-till and minimum tillage conservation practices, crop rotations, manure application, biochar application, compost application, and changes in grazing management;
- Increase the quantity of organic carbon in aquatic soils;
- Intentionally integrate trees (i.e., agroforestry), shrubs, seaweed, or other vegetation into management of agricultural and aquacultural lands, with preference for native vegetation where practicable and appropriate;
- Reduce or avoid carbon dioxide equivalent emissions in or from soils;
- Reduce nitrous oxide and methane emissions through changes to livestock or soil management;
- Reduce or avoid carbon dioxide equivalent emissions through increased energy efficiency or reduced fuel use; and
- Increase usage of precision agricultural practices to reduce fossil fuel emissions.

5.3 Fish and Pollinator Habitat Creation[6]

[5] RCW 89.08.620(2)
[6] RCW 89.08.620(4,5)

Projects that create riparian buffers or other fish habitat enhancements, or that create pollinator forage/habitat will receive higher prioritization. Conversely, projects that damage fish and wildlife habitat will be downgraded.

5.3 Application scoring weights

The above items are included in the scoring weights for each program component: Outreach, Planning and Design Only and Implementation application scoring.

Criterion	Definition	Outreach, Planning & Design	Implementation
Natural Resource Impact *(including CO2eq impact; fish and pollinator habitat creation)*	The magnitude, quality, and durability of direct and indirect benefits to natural resources and ecosystems resulting from the project or program.		30%
Ability to Deliver	The degree to which the applicant and its partners can execute the proposed work to expected standards, meet grant requirements, and complete the project within a realistic schedule.	35%	25%
Costs & Budget	The appropriateness, completeness, and place-based cost-effectiveness of the project or program budget, including alignment with the work, match requirements, or long-term financial sustainability.	10%	10%
Community Priorities	The extent to which the project or program reflects and advances locally identified priorities, needs, and relationships within the communities it affects or serves.	15%	10%
Maximizing Impact	The extent to which the project or program increases overall impact by connecting with other efforts, leveraging additional resources, and contributing to larger-scale or longer-term outcomes.	25%	15%
Expanding Reach	The extent to which the project or program broadens who and where the program serves, including new geographies, sectors, operation types, and historically underfunded or underserved recipients.	15%	10%
		100%	**100%**

In addition to considering the above metrics, the selection committee may seek to distribute funding based on categories: geography, land use type/commodity type served, farm size served. The selection committee may choose to award extra points to applicants (CDs and other public entities) as well as to applications including landowners/managers that have not previously been awarded SFF funding.

Applications submitted by public entities will be ranked higher if they are partnered with their local conservation districts.

5.4 Grant Limits

Each applicant (e.g., conservation district) may submit a maximum of four applications per fiscal year (a maximum of one application for Outreach, Planning, and Design Only and a maximum of three applications for Implementation).

Total funding request per application is limited to $15,000 for Outreach, Planning, and Design Only projects and $40,000 for Implementation projects.

No more than 20% of total annual SFF funds may be awarded to any single grant applicant.[7]

Applications may receive partially funding. Program manager will work with applicants on revisions to scope of work and budget for partial funding where applicable.

5.5 Applications

Conservation districts and other public entities may apply for a single grant from the commission that serves multiple farmers. For example, a district might submit one application to provide climate-smart technical assistance or to develop “Carbon Farm plans” (i.e., less comprehensive than conservation farm plans).

Additionally, multiple conservation districts and/or other public entities may partner to apply for funding to bundle innovative climate smart practices implemented on multiple farms or ranches at a larger or regional scale.

Any application involving lands leased from a state agency, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must include the department's approval in the application.

All applications must contain a detailed description of projects and climate-smart practices. Applications for implementation projects must also include estimated CO2 equivalent impact benefits (i.e., carbon sequestered and/or carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduced) using COMET Farm, COMET Planner or a similar, SCC-approved model.

Project managers will be responsible for estimating project impacts, except in situations where it’s not possible to use one of the recommended tools (**SFF - Eligible Practices and GHG Tools**) due to limitations of the tools. In these cases, project managers will work with SFF program manager to identify the appropriate tool for estimating CO2eq impact.

COMET estimates based on these carbon equivalency metrics in region- and practice-specific models will be used in the first five years of the SFF grant program. Where possible, program partners will evaluate and update practice-specific models used by the SFF program.

5.6 Equipment Purchases & Equipment Sharing

[7] RCW 89.08.615(5)

If the purchase of combustion engine-powered equipment is necessary to implement climate-smart practices in a cost-share project, the equipment must be new, or, if used, must have reasonably low mileage/hours, or be in good, working, serviceable condition. The goal is to replace older, high-emission combustion engine-powered equipment with equipment that emits lower emissions.

Districts applying for funds to operate an equipment-sharing program are strongly encouraged to have policies that establish a schedule of rental fees, and handling and inspection procedures that will be used for the loaning out and maintenance of the equipment. Consult regional managers for examples of policies in place at other districts. For any equipment to be shared among multiple districts, an inter-local agreement (ILA) managing the use of equipment is required. **The FEMA equipment usage rates** provides a good example. SFF can fund trailers for equipment sharing but can't fund insurance or registration. SFF can fund staff time to receive the equipment, provide staff training related to the equipment, and set up rental program. SFF cannot provide ongoing funding for the equipment rental program.

One equipment sharing application can be funded per fiscal year per conservation district or other public entity.

5.7 Administration of the Sustainable Farms and Fields program[8]

Up to fifteen percent (15%) of funds may be used by SCC to develop, or to consult or contract with private or public entities, such as universities or conservation districts, to develop:

- An educational public awareness campaign and outreach about the sustainable farm and field program; or
- The grant program, including the production of analytical tools, measurement estimation and verification (MEV) methods, cost-benefit measurements, and public reporting methods. Eligible costs associated with MEV development may include efforts led by WSDA for soil sampling and laboratory analysis, as well as data management and analysis.

No more than five percent (5%) of the funds may be used by SCC to cover the program's administrative costs.

SCC shall seek to maximize the benefits of the grant program by leveraging other sources of money, such as state, nonstate, public, and private.

SCC shall maintain a public list of projects and pertinent information, to be updated annually. Data may include a summary of state and federal funds, private funds spent, landowner or operator and other private cost-share matching expenditures, the total number of projects, and an estimate of carbon sequestered or carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduced.

Section 6. Budget and Financial Information

6.1 Budget template

See Sustainable Farms and Fields Program Procedures.

[8] RCW 89.08.615

6.2 Reimbursements

See Grants & Contracts Manual.

6.3 Vouchering

See Grants & Contracts Manual.

Section 7. Reporting, Monitoring, and Close Out Requirements

7.1 Progress Check-Ins

The SFF program manager may request status updates for funded projects during the funding period.

7.2 Reporting Requirements

A final report will be required for each funded project. See Sustainable Farms and Fields Program Procedures for detailed reporting requirements.

Districts or other public entities receiving equipment sharing awards may be required to report annually on shared equipment use for up to 10 years or the length of time that the piece of equipment is part of the equipment sharing program. That reporting will contribute to long-term data collection to track climate-smart practices funded through Sustainable Farms and Fields.

7.3 Program Specific Monitoring Requirements

SCC staff will coordinate with the SFF applicant and, with reasonable notice to the recipient of SFF funding, monitor the results of the funded projects.

This manual may be updated outside of Commission approved program manual update process to adjust based on ombuds work group and grants and contract manual updates in process.

Sustainable Farms and Fields - Policy Change Log for the Program Manual

Updated 11/12/2026

Note: The rows highlighted in gray for the page number and section are from the previous version of the guidelines.

Page	Section	Existing Policy	Proposed Update	Rationale
7	1.4	All applications for funding were in the same competitive pool. There was no policy regarding limit on total funding that could be alloted to TA/outreach only projects.	Create a distinct funding track for Outreach, Planning and Design only projects and allocate 30% of total funding available for grant awards to Outreach, Planning, and Design only projects and 70% of total available funding allocated to implementation projects.	In order to meet the legislative intent of SFF, the program will limit the overall percentage of SFF funding that goes towards Outreach, Planning, and Design only projects. (The commission shall develop and approve a prioritization metric to guide the distribution of funds appropriated by the legislature for this purpose, with the goal of producing cost-effective carbon dioxide equivalent impact benefits.) Using a percentage of total funding available for grant awards rather than a dollar amount will improve durability of this change.
12	5.3	Scoring rubric	Updated scoring rubric	The scoring rubric will be adapted to be consistent with the SCC model, with different scoring for projects involving BMP implementation and those that are TA only (no BMPs implemented).
13	5.4	No existing application funding request limits in program policy.	Add text: Total funding request per application is limited to $15,000 for outreach, planning and design only projects and $40,000 for implementation projects.	Impose limits on funding request amounts by funding track to attain more alignment with funding amounts that allow spreading of funds based on statutory language.
13	5.4	No existing limits on number of applications that could be submitted by each applicant (e.g., CD)	Add text: Each applicant (e.g., conservation district) may submit a maximum of four applications per fiscal year (a maximum of one application for outreach, planning, and desing only and a maximum of three applications for implementation).	Reduce review burden and encourage internal prioritization, by imposing limits on number of applications that an applicant may submit (by funding track)
9-10	3.5	The items listed here are currently ineligible for funding.	Add as eligible expenses: PPE as needed for activities in approved scope of work. Add as conditionally eligible expenses: honoraria/stipends/speaker fees, and speaker travel (pending determination of ombuds working group/SCC fiscal) ; Out of state/country travel; Staff training specific to scope of work / related to SFF eligible practices	This change adds as eligible or conditionally eligible expenses that Conservation District staff have expressed the importance of having included as eligible expenses through SFF.
10	3	Annual payments: To enrolled participants who have executed a contractual commitment with SCC for verified carbon storage or carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduction. No contract for carbon storage or changes to management practices may exceed twenty-five years. A program for annual carbon storage payments is under development and not part of the current funding opportunity at this time.	Delete	Wording exists in the current documents that reflects potential uses of SFF funding to pay for carbon storage. While this is an allowable use of SFF funds in statute, it does not reflect the way that the program has been implemented and SCC currently has no plans to develop this part of the program.
11	5	Partnerships: Applications submitted by public entities will be ranked higher if they are partnering with their local conservation districts.	Delete	This legacy wording is not relevant to the scoring rubric as partnerships are scored based on their general merits and ability to contribute to effective project delivery – not on who the specific partners are.
13	6	Participants who commit to contracted long-term carbon storage will be required to verify quantities of carbon sequestered through a more robust sampling methodology established by WSDA, WSU, the Washington State Soil Health Initiative (WaSHI), and/or third party verifiers where necessary or appropriate.	Delete	Without a program focus on long-term carbon storage, the need for verification of carbon storage through robust soil sampling is not necessary. Applicants may request funding for soil sampling as part of their SFF application, but the primary method for quantifying carbon impact of SFF funded project is through modelling, rather than measurement.

Page	Section	Existing Policy	Proposed Update	Rationale
13	6	SCC consults regularly with WSDA, WSU, NRCS, and the Washington Soil Health Initiative (WaSHI) to improve the SFF MEV system for estimating, measuring, and/or verifying sequestered carbon, and/or reductions in carbon dioxide equivalent emissions.	Delete	The SFF measurement estimation and verification (MEV) system is relevant to the part of the program around paying for carbon storage that is being removed from the manual. Thus, this text will also be removed.
14	6	Monitoring may include collecting soil samples, which will be used to improve the Measurement and Estimation Verification (MEV) system.	Delete	The SFF measurement estimation and verification (MEV) system is relevant to the part of the program around paying for carbon storage that is being removed from the manual. Thus, this text will also be removed.

	Sustainable Farms and Fields - Content Change Log for the Program Manual		
		Updated 11/12/2026	Note: The number and section rows that are highlighted in gray are referencing the previous version of the guidelines.
Page	**Section**	**Proposed Content Change**	**Rationale**
8	3.3.3.1	Add text: Outreach: conveying programming information and services to targeted landowners and the general public.	Provides clarity about eligibility of outreach
13	5.4	Add text: Applications may receive partially funding. Program manager will work with applicant on revisions to scope of work and budget for partial funding where applicable.	This additional text clarifies existing implementation of SFF.
13	5.5	Add text: All ~~proposals~~ **applications** must contain a detailed description of projects and climate-smart practices. **Applications for implementation projects must also include** ~~as well as~~ estimated CO2 equivalent impact benefits (i.e., carbon sequestered and/or carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduced) using COMET Farm, COMET Planner or a similar, SCC-approved model.	Clarification provided on type of application requiring estimated CO2 equivalent impact. Changed "proposals" to "applications" to align with language in manual.
13	5.5	Project managers will be responsible ~~for using COMET Farm~~ for estimating project impacts (see **SFF - Eligible Practices and GHG Tools**), except in situations where it's not possible ~~to use COMET Farm~~ due to limitations of ~~the~~ tool**s**. In these cases, project managers will work with SFF program manager to identify the appropriate tool for estimating CO2eq impact.	Replace reference to COMET Farm with link to document showing eligible practices and associated GHG estimation tools, allowing these to adapt outside of the Program Manual update.
14	5.6	One **application involving** equipment sharing ~~application~~ can be funded per fiscal year per conservation district or **other public entity.**	Minor wording change for clarification and adding text that had been accidentally left out of the previous document was added back in.
15	7.1	Add text: The SFF program manager may request status updates for funded projects during the funding period.	There was no existing language in the SFF program guidelines nor was there anything in the grants and contracts manual to refer to here, so this general text was added.
15	7.3	SCC~~, WSDA, WSU, and/or district staff~~ will coordinate with the SFF applicant and, with reasonable notice to the recipient of SFF funding, monitor the results of the funded projects.	Wording adjustment to better reflect practice.

Page	Section	Proposed Content Change	Rationale
7	2	Delete: All best management practices (BMPs) must meet NRCS conservation practice standards and specifications, or an SCC-approved practice as outlined in the Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual. An implemented BMP must be maintained for the duration of its estimated NRCS design lifespan.	Deferring to requirements outlined in the Grants & Contracts Manual.
7	2	All proposals must ~~be entered into a Formstack application (available on the SFF webpage when applications are being accepted) and~~ contain a detailed description of projects and climate-smart practices, as well as estimated CO2 equivalent impact benefits (i.e., carbon sequestered and/or carbon dioxide equivalent emissions reduced) using COMET Farm, COMET Planner or a similar, SCC-approved model.	This content is procedural and will be included in the new [Program] Procedure document that will be released with the Application Packet when the grant round opens
7	2	Delete: All projects besides equipment sharing and technical assistance-only projects must be entered into SCC Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS) upon receipt of the award notification.	This text will be moved into Program Procedures
7	2	Conservation districts and other public entities may apply for a single grant from the commission that serves multiple farmers ~~that have been pre-identified in the application~~. For example, a district might submit one application to provide climate-smart technical assistance or to develop "Carbon Farm plans" (i.e., less comprehensive than conservation farm plans) ~~for farmers and ranchers who have already requested assistance~~.	This wording will be adjusted as it is not a requirement that applicants pre-identify producers to receive technical assistance at the application phase (though pre- identification of producers may improve the competitiveness of the application).
7	2	SFF funding may be used for conference attendance if the applicant is speaking or presenting at the conference with information about projects/programs that have been or will be implemented under SFF. The expenses related to conference attendance should be included in the project budget at the application stage with sufficient detail for review and pre-approval by the program manager.	Since the two most common reasons for conference attendance (staff training specific to the needs of project implementation and outreach) are now eligible expenses, this text is no longer needed.
7	2	Delete: Applicants can submit more than one application per fiscal year. For example, a conservation district may submit an application to provide, e.g., technical assistance or cover crop seed for multiple farmers as well as additional applications to implement climate-smart practices for individual farmers.	Because of limits on number of applications that an applicant may submit per fiscal year, this text is no longer applicable.
7	2	Delete: If funding remains after the first application deadline, additional application deadlines will be announced.	This content became redundant due to simlar language in the manual template.
7	2	Delete: The applicant shall be notified by SCC if the application was not selected.	This content will be moved to the program procedures document

Page	Section	Proposed Content Change	Rationale
8	2	Delete: The maximum cost-share per landowner or operator per fiscal year is $100K unless a waiver is provided by SCC Executive Director or delegate. An overhead of up to twenty-five percent 25% is allowed to be billed based on actual hours worked for applicants' staff only. Overhead may not be charged by landowner or operators.	This content was duplicative of the Grants & Contracts Manual.
8	2	Delete: Work must be underway on all awarded SFF projects within 120 days of the funding allocation. Work may include technical assistance efforts or the actual implementation of BMPs.	Deferring to requirements outlined in the Grants & Contracts Manual.
8	2	Delete: All technical assistance costs must be vouchered for in the month following the incurred expenditures.	Deferring to requirements outlined in the Grants & Contracts Manual.
8	2	Delete text: For cost share projects, applicants may add up to 25% of project costs in Technical Assistance funds, if needed to implement the project. Technical assistance funds may include overhead and staff travel.	Deferring to requirements outlined in the updated Grants & Contracts Manual and new definition of TA
9	3	Delete: Allowable uses of Sustainable Farms and Fields grant funds include the following, based on RCW 89.08.615(6) and 89.08.615(9). A proposed project may include multiple categories of funding.	The information provided does not change substantively, but these sentences were deleted to help with document flow.
10	3	Delete: Other equipment purchases or financial assistance: As deemed appropriate by SCC to fulfill the intent of RCW 89.08.610 through 89.08.635, to be evaluated on a case by case basis.	This is language from the RCW that provides additional flexibility for SCC, but is not needed in program policy document.
10	3	Delete: Funding Options for Conservation Districts: Conservation districts applying for materials and supplies projects or demonstration projects should indicate in the application whether they intend to use the District Implemented Project (DIP) approach or the Cost Share approach. Generally, projects that provide a clear benefit to the farm/operation fit better as cost share while projects providing primarily environmental benefits make better DIP projects. Refer to the DIP section of the Grants and Contracts Policy and Procedure Manual for more details.	This content will be moved to the program procedures document
10	4	Delete: Climate-smart practices include NRCS practice standards for greenhouse gas emission reduction and carbon sequestration, and NRCS Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Practices for Fiscal Year 2023.	The text describes the origin of the list of eligible practices used in the first years of SFF funding. Since then that list has been updated and removed from policy documents, making this background information no longer applicable.
10	4	Delete: The list of SFF approved climate-smart practices will be updated, as needed, by the SFF Technical Advisory and Review Committee and the link to the currently approved practices will be updated before each application window opens.	This text will be moved into Program Procedures document

Page	Section	Proposed Content Change	Rationale
10	5	Delete: Other factors that may be considered to prioritize applications include but are not limited to: geographic distribution, commodity distribution, farm size, DEI, and creation of riparian or pollinator habitat to ensure that the SFF funds are implemented broadly and fairly.	This text became redundant when the content was reorganized.
12	5	Delete text; These scoring metrics are developed and approved by the SFF prioritization committee consisting of SCC, WSDA, WSU, NRCS, and WDFW staff.	The SFF committee advises on scoring metrics, but the commission will approve weighting of scoring rubrics and the SCC (agency) will approve additional details needed for use of scoring metrics in evaluating applications.
13	6	Delete: For the first five years of the SFF grant program, SCC anticipates using COMET Farm to estimate cumulative GHG emissions reduced and/or carbon sequestered by the implementation of climate-smart practices funded through SFF. The carbon equivalency metrics, or global warming potentials (GWPs), used in the COMET dataset were first published in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report (AR4), and are consistent with methods used in the Inventory of United States Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks. Currently utilized GWPs (IPCC 2021 AR6) are as follows: •1 ton of CO2 = 1 ton CO2eq •1 ton of CH4 = 20.8 tons CO2eq (fossil origin) / 27.2 tons CO2eq (non fossil origin) •1 ton of N2O = 273 tons CO2eq •1 ton of C = 3.7 tons CO2eq	This is language is background information on the COMET tools that is not necessary to include in the program manual.
13	6	Delete: The following information will be reported annually: Equipment type; Fiscal year of equipment purchase; Whether the equipment is still owned by the organization and part of an equipment rental program; which practice(s) are the focus of this equipment purchase;	This text will be moved into the Program Procedures document

Page	Section	Proposed Content Change	Rationale
13-14	6	Delete: Districts or other public entities receiving funds for non-TA projects will be required to submit photos (before and after) as part of the reporting process. The following information will be reported annually: • Equipment type; • Fiscal year of equipment purchase; • Whether the equipment is still owned by the organization and part of an equipment rental program; • which practice(s) are the focus of this equipment purchase; For the fiscal year: • Number of producers using this equipment purchased through these funds; • Number of acres impacted by use of this equipment; • Estimated CO2eq impact of equipment (based on per acre estimate completed at application stage).	Details on reporting will be moved to the program procedures document
14	6	Delete: Landowner or operators who receive SFF funding will have the option to allow their business to be listed in SCC's public biennial SFF report.	This optional listing has not been of interest to participating districts over the years and is not a critical component of the biennial SFF report so is being dropped from the Program Manual.

Washington State Conservation Commission

December 3, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, Executive Director

FROM: Allisa Carlson, Conservation District Services Director

SUBJECT: District Operations and Regional Managers Report

Action Item	
Informational Item	X

Report Summary:

Regional Managers (RMs) offer this report summarizing recent activities and support delivered to conservation districts including district operations, Commission operations, and program administration.

Operations and Administration

RMs continue to support all 45 conservation districts (CDs). Allisa Carlson was appointed as the new Conservation District Services Director on October 1, 2026. Allisa has spent the past seven years effectively serving as SCC's South Central RM, where she gained a deep appreciation for the distinct roles and needs of Washington's conservation districts and SCC's responsibility in supporting effective conservation district governance and operations statewide. In her new role, Allisa will report directly to James Thompson and play a vital role in the strategic direction and leadership of SCC. Led by the Conservation District Services Director, the RM team will support a holistic Conservation District Services Program designed to strengthen and enhance services provided to conservation districts. Additionally, Allisa will support two-way communication between districts and SCC and help guide strategic planning and decision-making informed by field-level understanding.

Allisa is temporarily covering the central RM districts until the position is filled. It is anticipated that a job announcement will be posted soon.

Conservation districts are preparing for elections scheduled to take place between January-March 2027. Virtual elections training was provided on September 29, 2026, by RMs, Bill Eller, Dani Madrone, and Paige DeChambeau. This team has also dedicated significant effort to updating and improving the Elections and Appointments Guide, related forms and materials, and the elections

webpage. A heartfelt thank you to everyone involved in these efforts. RMs are assisting conservation districts as questions arise and boards begin adopting election resolutions.

RMs attended their respective WACD area meetings throughout October. The WACD area meetings were an excellent opportunity to connect and learn from the conservation districts that they serve. RMs participated in the presentation of area district awards. Congratulations to all recipients of special recognition awards and District of the Year honors. Districts recognized as “2026 Districts of the Year” included:

- Northwest Area – San Juan Islands CD
- Southwest Area – Clark CD
- North Central Area – Columbia Basin CD
- Northeast Area – Spokane CD
- Southeast Area – Palouse CD
- South Central Area – South Yakima CD

Overall, RMs remain engaged in board meetings and district events, providing advice, resources, and problem-solving assistance with human resources, risk management, governance, board roles, financial management, and other day-to-day operational needs.

Chehalis Basin

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

The CBB approved a budget request to the Governor for Fish and Flood work. The recently approved 2027-29 budget proposal includes $75 million for Office of Chehalis Basin, allocating $31.5 million for aquatic species restoration, $31.5 million for flood damage reduction, $6.75 million for integrated projects that advance both “flood and fish” outcomes, and $5.25 million for OCB and Chehalis Basin Board operations, oversight, fiscal accountability, etc. The four Chehalis Basin CDs (Thurston, Grays Harbor, Lewis, and Mason) CDs are supported through this request for outreach and engagement. The CBB recently received presentations from WDFW on the Chehalis Basin predator reduction studies occurring on the Chehalis River mainstem between the mouths of the Newaukum and Chehalis Rivers. Researchers conducted the third of three fish removal stages. Over the 2026 summer, crews removed around 7,000 small mouth bass and rock bass using electrofishing. Stomach content surveys from previous efforts indicate small mouth bass diets included 15% Chinook Salmon.

Commission staff facilitated the September bi-monthly meeting of Chehalis Basin CDs and Basin partners.

Programs

RMs are engaged in several program manual updates, including those listed below. Leadership responsibilities for each program are being assigned among the RM team to improve clarity, consistency in program administration, and coordination with the Programs Team during implementation of the updates. These assignments will be reviewed at the beginning of fiscal year 2028.

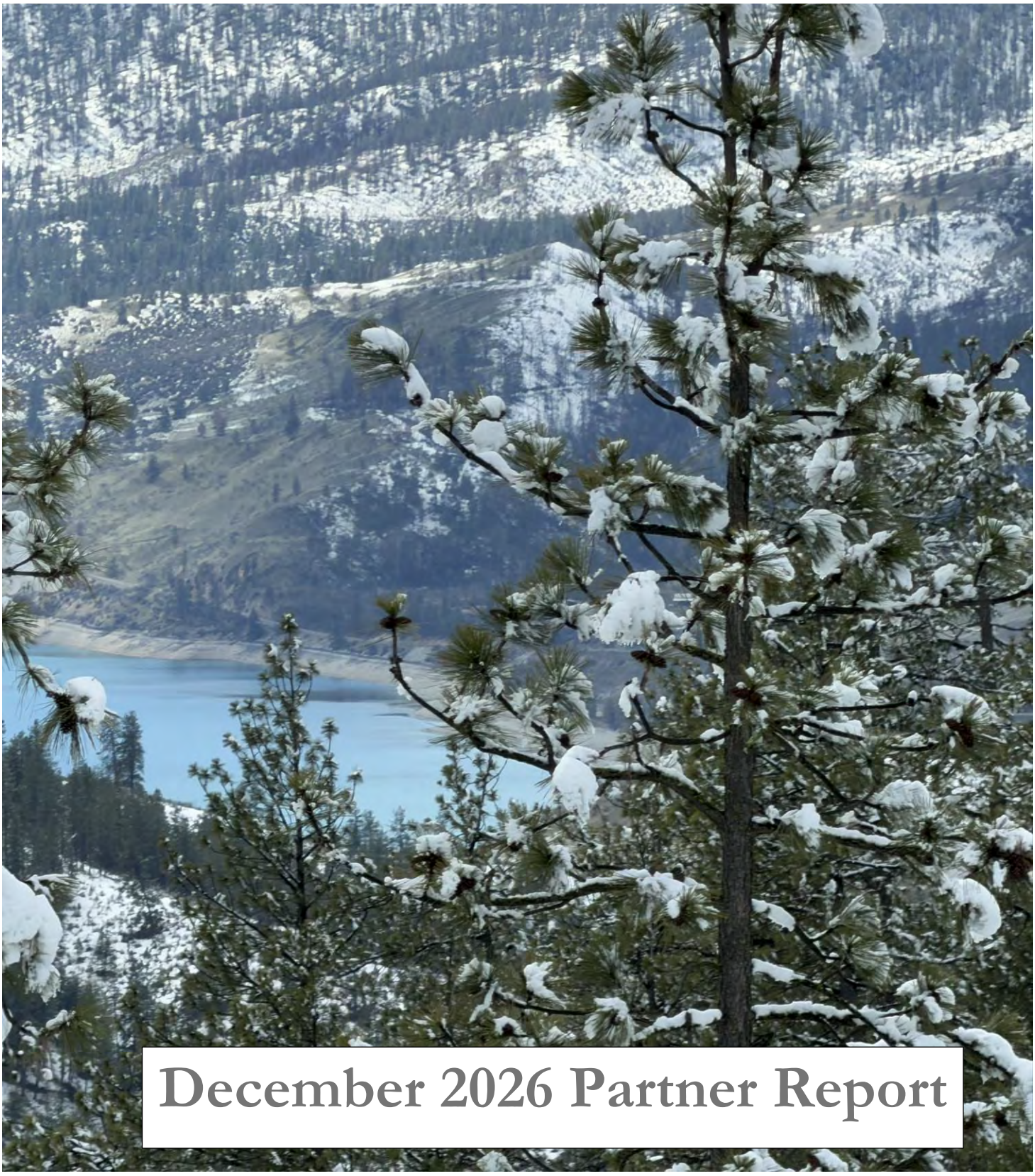
RMs currently lead the following programs:

- Implementation/CTA
- Shellfish
- Natural Resource Investments
- Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resilience Initiative (WSRRI)
    - Allisa continues to serve as the SCC representative on the WSRRI Steering Committee. The WSRRI Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) held its first meeting on October 29, 2026. The IAG includes representatives from partner organizations and stakeholder groups across the shrubsteppe landscape. We are pleased to have conservation district representation on the IAG through Kaley Wisher of Columbia Basin Conservation District. On October 30, 2026, a WSRRI “all-hands” meeting was held with approximately 70 attendees. The energy and momentum surrounding the initiative were strong, and we were pleased to have additional conservation district and commission representation, including Allan Warren and Tami Stubbs.
- NRCS Task Orders
- Professional Engineering

Partnerships & Partnering Assistance

The RM team continues to support partnership-building efforts among conservation districts and key partners, including Natural Resources Conservation Service, WADE, Puget Sound Conservation District Caucus, Center for Technical Development, WACD, DNR, Ecology, DFW, NACD, Washington Association of Land Trusts, State Auditor’s Office, RCO, Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, Washington Conservation Society, and the Integrated Pest Management Workgroup.

Washington Association of
Conservation Districts



December 2026 Partner Report

ADVOCACY

There were 20 resolutions adopted by the Area Associations in October. Twelve of the resolutions were reviewed by the WACD Legislative, Bylaws, and District Policies Committee, and eight were reviewed by the Natural Resources Committee. The committees made recommendations of Do Pass, Do Pass as Amended, or Do Not Pass for each resolution. You can find the original resolutions and amended resolutions **here**. The resolutions will now go to the Annual Meeting where CDs will formally vote on whether to adopt them.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

- January 18, 2026 – WACD Board Meeting
- February 6 – 10, 2026 – NACD Annual Meeting
- February 9, 2026 – WACD CD Celebration Day, Columbia Room
- February 15, 2026 – WACD Board Meeting
- February 16, 2026 – WACD Action Day on the Hill
- February 25, 2026 – State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

WACD COMMITTEE UPDATES

As I write this, it is November 9th, and WACD Committees are hard at work finalizing their reports ahead of the WACD Annual Meeting. Here is a sneak peek at what is to come:

Ag Viability Workgroup – The Ag Viability Workgroup was formed by resolution 2025-04 and began meeting in April of 2026. To date, the workgroup has developed a broad definition and shared framework that illustrate how conservation district activities contribute to agricultural viability in Washington State. The workgroup is also surveying conservation districts to identify and document specific programs and projects that support agricultural viability. You can find the brief that will be included in the Annual Meeting packet **here**.

Ways and Means Committee – The Ways & Means Committee was hard at work this past year. In January, they met and helped WACD staff prioritize their resolution workload. Then the committee got right to work looking at ways to "improve the campsite," as our good friend Larry Davis says. There will be three resolutions proposed at the WACD Annual Business Meeting that cover their proposal. A report will be included in the WACD Annual Meeting Packet.

Sustainable Funding Committee – The Sustainable Funding Committee has been hard at work and has a proposed path forward they will be working with CDs on this coming year. Look for an update on our ongoing work in the WACD Annual Meeting packet and on the HUB.

OPERATIONS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

- The WACD Board of Directors will hold a Board Retreat on December 2nd. Information on the retreat can be found here.
- December really is the most wonderful time of the year. Not only because of the holidays, but also because it's WACD Annual Meeting time. This year's theme is ~ Together, We Can Move Mountains, uniting districts and partners to create lasting impact. Learn more here, and please consider joining us.
- We have a full board! We are thrilled to have our area director vacancies filled. Please join us in welcoming: Russ Fick, NE Area Director, Pend Oreille CD; Jaki Shrauger, NE Area Director, Spokane CD; Teri Jo Summer-Reiger, NW Area Director, Whidbey Island CD; and Doug Schuster, SE Area Director, Rock Lake CD. You can see a full listing of WACD Officers and Directors here.
- WACD Legislative Day will span 2 days this year, 1 week apart. On February 9th, we will have a tabling opportunity for CDs in the Columbia Room. On February 16th, we will have a legislative action day with a legislative breakfast with our lobbyist and appointments for CDs to meet with legislators on the Hill. Two fun days, twice the impact!
- CD Election Bill ~ WACD's lobbyist, in partnership with SCC staff, is working with a bill sponsor to put forth an election bill this year that meets the intent of the recommendations from the Joint Committee on Elections. Stay tuned!

PLANT MATERIALS CENTER

- Sales - Fiscal year 2025-2026 end financials: This year marked a change in trajectory that the nursery is unaccustomed to. Sales finished at $176k less than expected, but for nursery-only activities, expenses were $222k less than approved. The result found the PMC recorded a net income of $14k.
- Field Operations - There are 31 acres that are either in production or are ready to enter production in Spring 2027. Of these, 5 acres are dedicated to live stake production, and the remaining 25 acres are dedicated to bareroot crops. 13.5 acres will be harvested this winter, and 11.5 acres are available for harvest in Winter 2027-2028. The remaining acre is dedicated to a seed orchard. Staff expanded the seed orchard to include Vine Maple and more Serviceberry.

  The scalable bareroot nursery expanded to double both the gravel bed and air-pruned bed capacity. The gravel beds will hold up to 10,000 plants, and the air-pruned beds will hold up to another 10,000 plants.
- Our long-time sales manager, Jacquie, moved on at the end of October. We will certainly miss her and wish her all the best in her future endeavors.
- We are thrilled to welcome Keegan as our new sales associate. Keegan graduated from Colorado State University with a B.A. in Natural Resources Management and a concentration in environmental sustainability.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
2026 Issue Highlights Report for the Washington Association of Conservation Districts

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is the state agency tasked with preserving, protecting and perpetuating fish, wildlife, and ecosystems, while providing sustainable fishing and hunting opportunities.

WDFW Director: Kelly Susewind is entering his eighth year as director of WDFW, after 28 years at the Washington State Department of Ecology. A lifelong outdoorsman and longtime resident of Washington, Susewind enjoyed the natural resources where he grew up in Grays Harbor County, hunting Roosevelt elk, fishing for salmon, and digging razor clams. He now oversees 2,400 employees statewide working toward the mission of conserving fish and wildlife and providing sustainable recreational and commercial opportunities.

Wolves: Since 2008, Washington's wolf population has grown by an average of 20% per year. After a one-time decline in 2024, Washington's minimum year-end wolf count increased by 17.4% to its highest count to date. As of Dec. 31, 2025, WDFW and Tribes counted 270 wolves and 49 packs statewide. Twenty-three of these packs were confirmed to be successful breeding pairs. These numbers compare with the previous year's (2024) count of 230 wolves in 43 packs and 18 breeding pairs. Because this is a minimum count, the total number of wolves in Washington is likely higher. For more information on the status of wolves in Washington, please see the 2025 Annual Wolf Report.

The WDFW wolf-livestock conflict management and expectations for non-lethal and lethal measures continue to operate under the guidance of the 2011 Wolf Conservation and Management Plan and the 2020 Wolf-Livestock Interaction Protocol.

Most wolves in the state (around 80% of known packs on a long-term annual average) are not involved in any documented livestock depredation. In 2025, five of the 49 known packs (~ 10%) statewide were implicated in at least one livestock depredation incident. Only two of those packs were involved in two or more depredations. In 2025, WDFW investigators documented 17 wolf depredation events on livestock involving 19 cattle. Eight calves were confirmed killed by wolves, while one was probably killed by wolves. Eight calves were confirmed injured by wolves, and two calves were probably injured by wolves. Along with implementing minimum two pro-active non-lethal deterrent measures, in many of these mentioned depredation instances there were other reactive or responsive non-lethal tools applied to deter future depredations, and they have had good results. However, eventually four wolves from three packs were lethally removed by the Department to help minimize the chances of future depredations on livestock.

More information at: wdfw.wa.gov/wolves. If you are interested in receiving email notifications of wolf activity updates, you can sign up here.

Riparian Data Engine (RDE): Since its rollout in summer 2025, WDFW has expanded the High Resolution Change Detection (HRCD) data at the heart of the RDE, adding coverage for 14 counties and making improvements to the platform based on user feedback. Conservation Districts remain a primary RDE user, applying it to riparian restoration planning and prioritization as well as Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) monitoring and implementation efforts. WDFW continues to welcome conservation district input on the tool and is available to help districts make the most of it in their work with private landowners. VSP groups can contact their WDFW regional staff to arrange a walkthrough or to discuss data needs.

High Resolution Change Detection (HRCD): Through funding from the State Conservation Commission (SCC), WDFW provides High Resolution Change Detection (HRCD) data to select Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) counties to assist them with implementation, monitoring, and reporting needs. HRCD uses aerial imagery to analyze land cover change overtime. In 2026, WDFW provided VSP counties with up-to-date HRCD data to support the 10-year reporting process. In addition, WDFW expanded the number of counties receiving HRCD data by providing 2011 land cover data to 14 additional counties. Landcover data provides baseline information on the presence and height of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous vegetation and can be used to evaluate changes against the VSP statutory 2011 baseline. WDFW staff are available to help counties with using HRCD data to support their program needs.

Washington Habitat Connectivity Action Plan (WAHCAP): In June 2025, WDFW published the WAHCAP, which includes maps of locations with high habitat connectivity value for wildlife and ecological resilience, priority locations for road crossings to mitigate for wildlife-vehicle collisions and road barriers to ecological connectivity, and strategies for connectivity conservation actions. Maps and data are publicly available through the WAHCAP ArcGIS online site. The WAHCAP maps identify areas of regional and statewide connectivity significance and agricultural and forestry lands are often integral to supporting habitat connectivity networks. Targeting landowner incentive programs to areas that support habitat connectivity are one way to focus conservation actions to support a larger regional and statewide habitat network. WDFW recognizes Conservation Districts as key partners in supporting habitat connectivity conservation.

Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI): WSRRI, jointly led by WDFW, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and SCC, and implemented by landowners, partners and tribes, is working to implement the WSRRI Long-term Strategy, collaboratively developed and published in 2024. WSRRI is focused on conserving and restoring Washington's shrubsteppe wildlife and habitat with an emphasis on addressing the escalating extent, frequency, and severity of wildland fires. WSRRI also addresses the needs of people that live and work in Washington's shrubsteppe ecosystems and benefit from healthy and resilient landscapes, habitat, and wildlife populations.

Administratively, in the past year, WSRRI has made progress towards establishment of the Implementation Advisory Group (IAG), which will play a critical role in long-term strategy implementation by providing input and guidance to the WSRRI steering committee. Specifically, the IAG will advise the steering committee on:

1. Action prioritization and development of 3-year workplans;
2. Criteria for spending and applying WSRRI resources, including funding;
3. Collaborative and strategic pursuit of funding to meet WSRRI's objectives; and
4. Strategic implementation of all components of the long-term strategy.

To collectively address habitat and wildlife conservation, working lands and agriculture, and wildland fire, the following organizations were invited to participate in the IAG: Audubon Washington; Conservation Northwest; Pheasants Forever; Washington Association of Land Trusts; Washington Conservation Action Education Fund; Washington Resource Conservation & Development; Washington Fire Chiefs Association; Washington Cattlemen's Association; Washington Wheat Growers Association; Washington Natural Heritage Program; Washington State Association of Counties; Conservation Districts; Bureau of Land Management; Natural Resources Conservation Service; United States Fish and Wildlife Service; United States Forest Service; The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation; The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; The Nez Perce Tribe; and The Spokane Tribe of Indians. The first meeting of the IAG occurred in October 2026.

Further, consistent with Habitat Restoration Action 13 in the long-term strategy, WSRRI is actively investing $670,969 into the establishment of three regional hubs where equipment and other resources can be pooled and stored, making them more accessible to partners and landowners. Hubs will be based within the Franklin County Conservation District (Franklin County), The Nature Conservancy's Moses Coulee Preserve (Douglas County), and WDFW's Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (Lincoln County), strategically distributing equipment and resources across partners and geographically across the shrubsteppe landscape.

WSRRI continues to manage its established habitat restoration and wildlife friendly fencing programs, providing funding, implementation expertise and capacity, and other resources (e.g., plants, fence markers, herbicides) to landowners, partners and tribes. This year, through two separate project solicitations, WSRRI is supporting habitat restoration projects by multiple partners and tribes, which are either actively being implemented or soon will be.

These partners and tribes include: The Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy, Washington State Parks, The Mule Deer Foundation, The Spokane Tribe of Indians and the Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Chelan Douglas Land Trust, The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Kittitas Environmental Education Network, and WDFW. Collectively these projects will occur across private, state and federal ownerships. Together, these projects address both upland and riparian restoration through invasive plant management; restoration of fire control lines; reestablishment of native shrubs, forbs and bunchgrasses through seeding and planting; and installation of beaver dam analogs. To date, WSRRI has supported more than 46 habitat restoration projects across almost 3,600 acres and 13 stream miles.

WSRRI is also supporting wildlife-friendly fencing efforts by the Kittitas, South Douglas, Foster Creek, Okanogan, and Columbia Basin Conservation Districts, as well as the Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation and Washington State Parks. WSRRI is providing funding to Cascadia Conservation District for cultural resources review and consultation support for many of these fencing projects. Effectively, these collective wildlife-friendly fencing efforts should result in improved livestock management on 1,700 acres through use of virtual fencing, 14 miles of new wildlife-friendly fencing (replacing burned

fence), 25 miles of fencing retrofitted to meet wildlife-friendly standards; and removal of five miles of hard fencing from the landscape.

Priority Habitats and Species (PHS): In the past year, the PHS focused on getting usable mapping products into partners' hands. Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) maps are now readily available, along with a guide to using them. PHS also updated its shrubsteppe mapping, and in December 2025 updated its companion user guide. Behind these products, staff reorganized the PHS list in July 2026, reclassifying roughly one-quarter of Priority Species into new "Vulnerable Concentration Areas" so users can more clearly identify what constitutes a priority area for each affected species. PHS has also been working with WSDOT and other partners this year to implement the Washington Habitat Connectivity Action plan by providing technical assistance to counties about how to integrate habitat connectivity into planning processes. In the coming year, PHS anticipates releasing updated Management Recommendation for shrubsteppe and for Biodiversity Areas and Corridors. PHS staff are glad to help CDs and local governments make use of these products. Contact your local WDFW biologist with questions or to request additional information.

Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP): WDFW continues to partner with SCC and conservation districts to support counties enrolled in the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP). The VSP is a statewide program for protecting and enhancing critical areas on agricultural land while maintaining the viability of agriculture. Currently, 28 of Washington's 39 counties participate in the program. WDFW's activities and accomplishments in 2026 include:

- WDFW reviewed and commented on 27 VSP 5-year reports as part of its participation in the state agency Technical Panel.
- WDFW and partners attended 10 VSP site visits, hosted by conservation districts and counties, to learn about the VSP conservation work happening statewide.
- WDFW participated in the Shrubsteppe Collaborative Workgroup to support VSP counties with the development of shrubsteppe monitoring programs.
- WDFW assisted the SCC with the development of preliminary adaptive management guidance to support counties with post 5-year reporting changes.

WDFW participated in monthly VSP Office Hours and individual county consultations to support county reporting needs.

Washington's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) approved in 2026: This plan and supporting resources are available online (https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/swap) and ready for implementation by WDFW and statewide conservation practitioners. The SWAP serves four key purposes for WDFW: improve conservation delivery, guide limited conservation funding, support implementation of the WDFW 25-Year Strategic Plan, and enhance conservation communication. The SWAP outlines **recommended species, habitat, ecosystem, and landscape conservation actions** to 1) help prevent the need to list species under protective regulations and 2) create environmental conditions that support durable species recovery. The SWAP makes connections with WDFW's Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) and the Washington Natural Heritage Program (WNHP) housed in Washington Department of Natural Resources for Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN; fish, wildlife, and plants) and Habitats of Greatest Conservation Need (WDFW Priority Habitats and imperiled vegetation communities identified by WNHP). This edition of the SWAP provides searchable tables, online

and GIS open data to use in planning and delivering conservation projects. Every U.S. state and territory has maintained a State Wildlife Action Plan since 2005, and the plans are updated at *minimum* every ten years.

Agricultural practices: WDFW uses agricultural practices as tools to support land rehabilitation; provide recreational opportunities; and contribute to local community character. Agricultural leases may improve soil health or provide feed or cover for ungulates or waterfowl. Grazing permits use livestock to control vegetation, provide nutrients, and support game management.

In 2026, WDFW managed 76 agricultural leases covering about 11,000 acres, and 49 grazing permits covering about 99,000 acres. A new grazing permit in Olympic-Willapa Hills supports dusky Canada geese in this important migratory corridor. Overall, leases and permits are monitored to evaluate ecological integrity over time. Monitoring is showing that these areas are contributing to ecological integrity.



Photo points at monitoring plots on Ellemeham grazing permit in 2018 (left) and 2024 (right)

Restoring fire prevention and forest health: The 2025-27 enacted budget reduced WDFW funding for fire prevention and forest health by 80%, eliminating 19 positions (9.2 FTEs) that supported on-the-ground implementation of projects that support wildfire prevention; habitat and species recovery; local community economies; and resilience to changes in climate, pests, and disease. Key tools used to accomplish these goals on WDFW-managed forests are thinning, planting, noxious weed control, and prescribed fire. WDFW's 2014 Forest Management Strategy set a target to treat 100,000 of WDFW's 200,000 acres of forest by 2039. From 2014 to present, WDFW has treated:

- 11,872 acres of commercial thinning
- 9,757 acres of non-commercial thinning
- 7,238 acres of prescribed fire
- 858 acres of planting for vegetative diversity and recovery
- 623 acres of noxious weed control

From over 4,000 acres of treatments biennially previously, WDFW anticipates implementing less than 1,000 acres this biennium. To date in 2026, WDFW has completed:

- 122 acres of commercial thinning
- 123 acres of non-commercial thinning
- 371 acres of prescribed fire
- 85 acres of planting
- 84 acres of weed control

Combined, all activities are required to achieve wildfire risk reduction, habitat and species, local community, and resilience goals. In 2026, more than 3,500 acres of WDFW-managed forests have burned in wildfires, while over 406,000 acres have burned statewide. A wildfire that started on July 26 this year in the Okanogan's Sinlahekin valley has already burned approximately 80% of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area.

Project example 1: Wildfire in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area



Sinlahekin Wildfire June 2026. Taken from the Sinlahekin HQ

Project example 2: Scotch broom control on the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area.



Untreated *Treated*

Project example 3: Results of combined treatments in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area.



Combined forest management tactics of thinning and prescribed burning were implemented previously. Photos show after the Sinlahekin Fire 2026

Shared Stewardship strategy: WDFW continues to partner with the US Forest Service (USFS), state agencies, tribes, local governments, and other private entities on Shared Stewardship initiatives to work on mutual cross-boundary priorities at the landscape scale. WDFW has three Shared Stewardship Implementation Lead (SSIL) positions covering central Washington, northwest Washington, and southwest Washington. The focus has been on coordinating resources in key areas to achieve meaningful outcomes for forest health and habitat and learning how to effectively combine our unique authorities and skillsets. These focal areas do not preclude Shared Stewardship work in other areas of the state. The Department continues to coordinate with local partners on needs and opportunities to bring in resources to plan, design, permit, and implement forest restoration projects. Primary engagement with the USFS occurs through participation in various forest health collaboratives and their respective national forests:

1. In southwest Washington, the SSIL serves on the advisory council for the Olympic Forest Collaborative supporting the Olympic National Forest, and as the agency representative on both the Pinchot Partners and the South Gifford Pinchot Forest Collaborative to coordinate with and review projects occurring on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. This has led to the final decision on Shared Stewardship's projects such as Little White Salmon being signed and implemented with full collaborative support.

2. In northwest Washington, WDFW's SSIL continues to engage with the Darrington Collaborative to facilitate forest health projects on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (MBS) through collaboration with the MBS, state, and tribal partners along with non-profit organizations such as Conservation Northwest, and local stakeholders. Survey and data collection have been done to clear hurdles for in-progress projects and to develop future projects. Partner collaboration has been instrumental in achieving habitat gains on the Forest. Keeping the improvement of wildlife habitat at the forefront, non-commercial thinning (NCT) projects were developed in both the Greenwater and North Fork Stillaguamish Drainages. Partners are attempting to use these NCT acres to leverage habitat

and forest resiliency gains from existing nearby commercial projects. Currently, 295 acres are either proposed or are being implemented in these drainages.

3. Within the Central Washington Initiative (CWI) focal landscape, WDFW's CWI SSIL serves as the WDFW representative on the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative (NCWFHC) and the Naches Forest Partnership (NFP) to facilitate engagement with the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF) for projects occurring in Eastern Washington. The SSIL has fostered working relationships with OWNF, DNR, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and multiple non-profit and community-based organizations to identify and prioritize cross-boundary restoration opportunities, develop plans, and support implementation efforts for terrestrial and aquatic restoration projects. At the request of the OWNF, WDFW's CWI SSIL worked closely with partners to implement annual forest health monitoring for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) in north central Washington. In 2026, WDFW and DNR partnered with several members of the NCWFHC members to leverage partner resources and host a series of volunteer efforts to augment field capacity in the Wenatchee River Ranger District (WRRD) and Methow Valley Ranger District (MVRD). In partnership with the Methow Valley Citizens Council, WDFW and DNR hosted 6 volunteer days in July of 2026 which helped hit the field mapping target for plots on the Lookout and Woodpecker Timber Sales. These efforts resulted in a total of seven control, six post-treatment, and three pre-treatment plots completed. Participants included the DNR, WDFW, Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board, Conservation Northwest, U.S. Forest Service, Methow Valley Citizens Council, the Sustainability Youth Corps High School Students, the WWU Sustainability Fellowship Program Interns, Okanogan Conservation District, and the NCWFHC. In September of 2026, WDFW staff worked with OWNF, DNR, and Cascadia Conservation District to host a series of Volunteer Thursdays on the WRRD which resulted in a total of 15 pre-treatment plots completed in the Eagle Creek project area. Across these weeks, we had participants from eight different partner organizations including the DNR, WDFW, Cascadia Conservation District, Conservation Northwest, The Wilderness Society, U.S. Forest Service, Lake Wenatchee Fire and Rescue, and the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative.



European green crab management: field updates and partner highlights

In 2025, Washington's coordinated effort to manage invasive European green crabs (EGC) continued to expand, driven by strong partnerships among WDFW, tribes, Washington Sea Grant, universities, shellfish growers, and other local organizations. More than 348,000 trap set days were deployed statewide, removing 1,096,169 green crabs, slightly more than in 2024. Warmer water temperatures fueled population growth along the West Coast, contributing to higher catches and new detections in previously unconfirmed areas.

In Hood Canal, WDFW launched the Regional Coordination Group, uniting 17 partners and expanding trapping by more than 30%. This effort led to new detections at nine sites and strengthened collaboration with tribal and shellfish-growing partners.

By the end of 2025, there were more than 50 co-managers, tribes, and partners doing EGC work across Washington state. This network and coverage will continue to grow into 2026 thanks to sustained state funding and new federal funding. Partners' trapping efforts are strategic, efficient, and well-coordinated thanks to the dedication of individual groups and support from Regional Coordination Groups, which are now operating in seven areas.

Refer to our new blog post for more details, the 2025 green crab detection map, research and partnership updates, seasonal trends, and much more. Catch updates are also available on WDFW's EGC Online Hub, which helps collect and organize data from co-managers, tribes, and partners, involved in managing these invasive shore crabs.



Cowlitz River smelt fisheries, and increased advance notice, lead to successful dipping

After years of announcing smelt fisheries in the Cowlitz River just days or hours before opening, in 2024, WDFW switched to publishing a tentative dipping schedule on our webpage to provide more advance notice of potential fishing days while balancing increasing fishing effort with sustainable management practices. WDFW staff also publish regular observations on smelt presence and Cowlitz River conditions to help inform prospective dippers.

While these Columbia River smelt—also known as eulachon—didn't cooperate in 2024, returning later than the scheduled dipping days, smelt fishers had much more success during dips on Feb. 18 and 21, 2026, harvesting an estimated 114,675 pounds of smelt. We're proud of February's successful fisheries, and how WDFW's updated smelt communications and management is helping make this fishery more accessible, sustainable, and cooperative with local communities.

More information, including how to's for smelt dipping and frequently asked questions, is available on our Cowlitz River smelt webpage.



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.



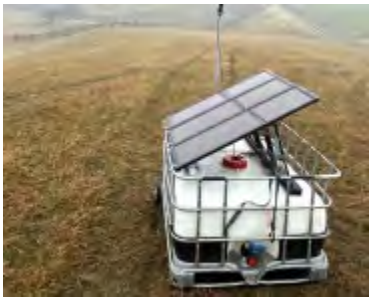
New interactive map helps track aquatic biodiversity in Washington rivers

WDFW launched a new interactive online map that lets people explore where fish and other aquatic species live in Washington's rivers.

The interactive map can be used as a planning tool for conservation districts, land-use planners, municipalities, and tribal governments statewide. Information from the map informs permitting and development decisions by letting managers know which species live within their watershed so they can preserve and protect them. It also helps prioritize habitat restoration and fish passage projects by identifying which species have been recently detected in specific watersheds.

This map is part of the agency's ongoing Aquatic Biodiversity Study. Everyone can view the map on the WDFW website to learn about the diversity of aquatic life in Washington's rivers, while seeing how the information supports conservation and restoration efforts.

Link: Learn more in our news release.



WDFW staff member uses innovative design to help prevent wolf depredations on livestock

Radio-Activated Guard (RAG) boxes are common in the world of wildlife, yet not easy to procure or set up. They are non-lethal devices designed to deter wolves and other carnivores from approaching domestic animals. When the device is triggered by a signal from a radio-collar on a wolf, it causes lights to flash and loud music to play, scaring the animal off. Unfortunately, they are not manufactured consistently and the old design, made up of about ten individual and unwieldy parts, makes it so they are not very user friendly. A WDFW staffer is working to change that. Learn more about how his DIY design is saving money and

streamlining the use of RAG boxes in southeast Washington in our blog. Photo courtesy of Defenders of Wildlife.



Follow fire restrictions to keep communities, wildlife, and sensitive habitats safe

For many, summer's sunny days remind us why we live in the Pacific Northwest, but with the warm weather and clear skies also comes fire danger. This year, fire restrictions went into effect on June 15 for WDFW-managed lands in Eastern Washington, about two weeks earlier than normal. This is in response to what's expected to be a hotter-than-average summer, as well as a statewide drought declaration already in effect due to low snowpack this winter.

This includes restrictions on fires or campfires, discharging firearms for target shooting, smoking outside of enclosed vehicles, welding, operating chainsaws, and operating a motor vehicle away from developed roads, among others. Target shooting is still permitted at two Department shooting ranges during certain hours through Aug. 15; visit our news release for more information.

These restrictions apply to WDFW-managed lands; be sure to check the rules for the county or other jurisdiction where you're traveling. Following these restrictions helps keep communities, wildlife, and sensitive habitats safe.

Director's Bulletins are also published on WDFW's Medium blog and archived on the Director's webpage.

Washington State Conservation Commission

December 3, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Tara Long, Strategic Initiatives Manager

SUBJECT: Strategic Planning Workshop

Action Item	
Informational Item	x

Summary:

At the December 2026 SCC regular business meeting, Commissioners will review and refine draft mission statements, vision statements, values to guide our work, and objective statements that were developed at interactive workshops that took place between May 2026 and November 2026. Their conversations and direction will inform final versions that will form our next strategic plan and advance for final adoption at the January 2027 SCC regular business meeting.

Staff Contact:

Tara Long
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(564) 669-0049

Background and Discussion:

Since May 2027, SCC staff have been conducting engagement and interactive workshops with commissioners and members of the public to develop a new strategic plan that will guide how we approach our work for the next five years. These efforts resulted in draft mission statements, vision statements, values to guide our work, and objective statements that were collaboratively developed with commissioners, districts, and SCC staff.

SCC staff received direction from Commissioners to refine these workshop outputs into refined drafts for Commissioners to discuss and further develop. Below are the outputs from the workshops. We will present refined versions for discussion at the December 2026 business meeting.

Draft Mission Statements - all tied with 20 points each:
SCC supports community-based voluntary conservation to improve natural resources.
Empowering voluntary conservation by supporting local conservation districts with resources and statewide coordination to sustain Washington's natural resources.
SCC supports conservation districts to delivers community-driven, voluntary conservation of resources to create a healthy and resilient future.

Draft Vision Statements
We envision a future with a resilient natural environment that sustains communities, ecosystems, and working lands. (24 points)
All Washingtonians understand the value of and care for our diverse natural resources. (13 points)
All communities have the resources they need to reach their voluntary conservation goals. (10 points)

Draft Values

Collaborative - 3	People-focused	Voluntary - 2
Empowering - 3	Adaptive - 2	Trusted
Knowledgeable	Science-informed	Community-driven - 3
Effective	Relationship-driven	Resilient - 2
Transparent / communicative - 2	Equitable - 2	Facilitation
Coordination	Innovative - 2	Inclusive - 2
Inspiring	Incentivized	Supportive - 2
Efficient - 2	Flexible - 2	Strengthening
Common mission	Partnership	

Draft Objectives
Conservation districts: Recognize, value, and strengthen the unique functions and roles played by conservation districts and SCC to empower voluntary conservation throughout Washington state.
Staff: Clarify decision-making, improve communication, and build cross-team collaboration to develop a more connected, adaptable and joyful work force.
Operations: Build consistent and transparent processes, procedures, and grant guidelines to support the diverse needs of conservation districts through technology and process improvements.

Next Steps:
SCC staff will present a final draft at the January 2027 business meeting for adoption.