

SCC – CDs Roundtable Meeting

March 12, 2026

Facilitated by Jessica Wilson | Notes by Tami Stubbs
Next Roundtable Meeting: April 9, 2026 – 9:30 AM

Welcome & Roundtable Discussion Topic Introduction

Jessica Wilson, SCC Chief Engagement Officer, welcomed everyone to the March Roundtable meeting and introduced the meeting topics.

Quick Budget Update: James Thompson

James Thompson, SCC Executive Director, reported that the state budget is still an ongoing story and will be voted on today (March 12). The governor will then have 20 days to review the proposed budget and either approve or veto.

In the proposed Operating budget, \$1.25 M has been restored for Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resilience for FY 2027, with more funding to come in the next biennium. Sustainable Farms & Fields was reduced by \$750 K (a 50% reduction) in FY 2027 and beyond. There were no cuts to technical services delivery or Riparian Grant Program outreach funding as had been feared earlier. The proposed budget was more positive for SCC than other agencies – SCC fared well and will continue to inform legislators about our programs. Information will be emailed out to CDs once the budget has been voted on. There were no changes in SCC funding in the Capital budget, just some shifting of funding sources.

SCC Staffing Update: James Thompson

SCC is currently undergoing a moderate shift in the organizational structure, with several recruitments coming up. The new organizational chart can be viewed here: [Org Chart - 01.2026](#). Applications for the Director of Tribal Affairs are under review, and the Director of Programs position description is being worked through the state HR system. Two staff members – Mike Baden and Sarah Wilcox – are departing. Both will be missed very much! Mike is the NE/NC Regional Manager and acting Director of RMs. He is moving on to a new position with Spokane CD. Sarah is the Strategic Initiatives Manager and will be moving on to become a business development manager with the Washington State Department of Commerce, working in international trade. Congratulations to Mike and Sarah!

While SCC works to fill Mike's position, the NE/NC region will be supported by temporarily dividing the workload among the RM team. Tami will cover Lincoln, Stevens, Ferry, and Pend Oreille CDs; Allisa will cover Okanogan and Columbia Basin CDs; and Josh/Jean will work with Adams and

Spokane CDs. The RM Director position still needs to be approved by the state HR system. In the meantime, James is supervising the RMs to be close to the process. In addition, SCC will be working to build capacity in the grant program team by hiring two new supervisors. There will be a new staff member for Commission & Organizational Development to work with the SCC commissioners. This position will be part of the communications team and will be involved in strategic planning and commission engagement. It's a new role and has been created to ensure that commissioners have the communication they need to make informed decisions.

The new Director of Programs will be supported by the two new supervisor positions to manage the programs space. The goal is to add resources and build capacity for program management. The current FTE recruitments were existing positions and won't affect funding to districts.

CD Emergency Management Plans: Jean Fike and Joy Garitone

Jean introduced Joy Garitone, Kitsap CD District Coordinator, who suggested a discussion on CD emergency management plans. Joy related that CDs have a unique role with farmers/landowners, and she would like to see CDs develop emergency management plans for greater preparedness to work with livestock producers and other farmers. She has done research up to the state level on how to help farmers be prepared, what a collaborative effort might look like (for example, providing livestock feed during weather disasters or fire and reducing unnecessary culling). She wants to start the discussion among CDs to ideally have something funded or at least organized/partnered to communicate the tools and resources that are available. Joy wants to ensure that SCC and districts can function no matter what's going on in the world and noted that CDs are well-positioned to assist in emergencies. She used the example of her district cooperating with the Navy on an exercise to provide information in the event of a toxic spill.

Tom Salzer concurred – districts know who lives at the end of rural roads – places where there may be barns for shelter, stored fuel, and more. It's an important kind of knowledge that could be very helpful in an emergency where the infrastructure is interrupted.

Jean shared this information from MRSC: <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/public-safety/emergencies/emergency-planning>.

Zorah Oppenheimer shared that her district has been working with Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency (CRESA) to support livestock evacuation. They purchased more than 100 livestock evacuation/first aid kits for distribution last year.

Karen Hills shared a resource for agricultural climate resilience: <https://agr.wa.gov/washington-agriculture/climate-resilience-plan-for-washington-agriculture>

Emergency management planning involves many, many considerations and would require up to 1.0 FTE staff time for some districts. We appreciate Joy starting the conversation!

FY 2027-29 Decision Packages Survey: Kate Delavan

Kate Delavan, SCC Deputy Director, gave an update on the CDs FY 2027-29 budget survey. Many thanks to the 19 CDs who filled out the survey before the priority deadline. Kate knows that it was a big effort, and it is greatly appreciated! Now it's time to dig in and work on the FY 2027-29 biennium – by mid-September, the SCC budget request needs to be submitted to the Governor's office and Office of Financial Management.

The goal for this biennium is to start the process sooner and create more opportunities for meaningful dialogue and input. A virtual/in-person conversation was held with CDs on 2/09/2026 to gather input for the budget survey. The initial analysis of the survey will be shared with the commissioners on 3/19/2026, the initial slate of decision packages will be presented, and their approval will be requested. At the May SCC meeting, additional requests and strategy considerations will be discussed.

The budget survey information will enable a deeper dive into what CDs need from SCC programs. It was designed to assess demand for SCC programs, and requested information on the amount of work that could be completed in the 2027-29 biennium – the funding needed to maintain services, and the amount of funding needed if there were no limits to address demand and natural resource concerns. Additionally, feedback on what worked and what could be improved in future surveys was requested. Kate presented a spreadsheet with the data broken down by program (see attachment A). This first round of data provided incredible information; there was also qualitative data gathered with the survey that can be used to inform future conversations with commissioners.

A deadline of April 17 was set for anyone who would still like to participate and missed the first deadline. The survey can be accessed here: [SCC Program Feedback form for CDs - Intellistack](#). Roundtable participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to provide feedback through the survey, and expressed concern about how to make the hard decisions on how much funding to request from the legislature – asking for what we think we can get rather than what can actually be used. There was a question on SCC's strategy for determining the budget request.

Kate acknowledged that this will be a difficult conversation. The survey tool is an important step to inform commissioners, and there will be more conversations in the coming months. The direction coming from the Governor and legislature, the state's budget climate, not hurting some programs in favor of others, maximizing investment, and the best chances for success will all be considered in budget conversations with the Commissioners. James reiterated his appreciation for everyone's time and investment to quantify true need.

Dani commented on how SCC used the information from the CD's Forest Health survey based on their needs. All communications focused on the impact of lost funding and what the CDs could

spend to meet their needs. This proved to be a successful strategy during the last session; legislators knew the funding was inadequate, and it proved helpful for clawing back some funding for FHCWR in the current budget climate. She encouraged thinking broadly about all programs and being careful about creating competitiveness among SCC programs.

Craig Nelson offered that when talking with legislators, it's helpful to know what the statewide need is to communicate three numbers: the ask, what we can do, and what the need is. It's important to be up front and honest as a community to include all those numbers.

Joy Garitone felt this was a strong survey because it was a better reflection of actual numbers; she mentioned the importance of multibennial funding to accomplish big projects and the difficulty in helping others understand the importance of conservation.

Dani noted that there may be follow-up questions for participants from SCC to clarify responses to survey questions. Kate concluded the discussion by informing the group that program managers were involved in developing the survey, and the survey will be re-evaluated going forward.

Clallam CD Election Update: James Thompson and Kim Williams

James Thompson and Kim Williams, Clallam CD District Manager, provided an update on the Clallam CD election lawsuit.

To provide a brief background on the issue, there was a challenge to the 2024 Clallam CD election; there was an investigation, the district was found to be compliant, and the election was certified. The compliance finding was challenged, and a lawsuit was brought forward; there was a bench trial in late 2025, and the state Superior Court ordered the election decertified. SCC did not appeal the judge's decision.

The judge thought there was ambiguity in SCC election rules; the judge's preference was to verify a voter's eligibility prior to a ballot being sent to a voter. The issue is very important to SCC, and there is a need to be very clear on this rule. Conversations are ongoing and may result in increased discussion regarding rulemaking. Rulemaking changes would involve public input.

Kate Delavan informed the group that conversations at the March Commission meeting will include proposing updates to the elections WAC in response to the judge's ruling and the attorney's guidance. SCC staff are proposing to narrowly scope the rulemaking so that it can be completed in advance of the next election cycle.

Kim hopes that any potential WAC updates will be shared for CD input and will include District Manager voices in the process; she hopes for opportunities to engage, both inside and outside of public comment.

Other Topic: Rates and Charges

Zorah Oppenheimer asked if there are plans to create a WAC for rates and charges, and whether portions of the assessment WAC (WAC 135-100) apply to rates and charges. The special assessment WAC was written before rates and charges were added to the RCW (RCW 89.08.405). SCC staff thanked Zorah for flagging this issue and agreed to look into it.

Mike Baden informed the group that only one CD still collects assessments (RCW 89.08.400). Rates and charges have a different administrative structure and require public hearings, developing a first-year budget, etc. The requirements set forth by RCW 89.08.400 would also tie back to rates and charges and would cover the bases as far as process and posting requirements. Zorah would like to see an update to the WAC to include rates and charges. The RM team is in the process of updating the District Operations Brief on Rates and Charges.

Website Accessibility Requirements: Paige DeChambeau

Paige DeChambeau, SCC Communications Director, reminded the group that websites must meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility standards beginning in April 2027. She is planning a session at WADE on the topic and sent out a survey to districts to gauge their progress in attaining website accessibility and if they have any resources or information to share with others.

The SCC Communications Team realizes that the process is going to be a big lift for districts; the accessibility requirements extend to all digital communications – not just websites. She would like to hear from others about what they have done so far, the questions they have, and what they would like to learn about at WADE.

Sarah Moorehead requested a conversation about practical steps to implement accessibility laws in the digital space; she has concerns that there is such a broad reach and the standards might not be attainable; the work will be expensive and could be infeasible. CDs will have varying capacities to complete this work, and she wonders if there are ways that resources could be shared to reduce the burden. Jessica said the law states that if the accessibility requirements create a great burden, organizations should document what they have done, what they can do, and what contributes to the burden.

MRSC has provided an article on the topic: <https://mrsc.org/stay-informed/mrsc-insight/february-2026/ada-standards-websites-apps>. Please reach out to Paige with any questions.

Closing: Jessica Wilson

- James Thompson expressed gratitude to Dani Madrone for all her work during the 60-day legislative session.
- Thank you to Sarah Moorehead and Craig Nelson for their work planning the WADE conference, along with assistance from Alison Crowley and others.
- Please use the Roundtable Discussion Topics tool on SCC's [Business Improvement](#) webpage to submit suggestions for future meeting agendas.
- The April Roundtable meeting will be a workshop on Conservation Technical Assistance.
- Next meeting: Thursday, April 9, 9:30 AM

Attachment A: Draft preliminary results of program demand survey. These numbers have not been verified.

Number of respondents: 19 conservation districts				
Program	# of CDs	Maintenance level	No limit level	Other amount
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	6	\$735,400	\$1,497,000	
Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)	18			\$14,240,842
Disaster Assistance Program (DAP)	11			\$757,000
Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resiliency (FHCWR)	16		\$10,342,416	
Irrigation Efficiencies Grant Program (IEGP)	10	\$26,244,185	\$59,105,185	
Natural Resources Investments (NRI)	19	\$4,941,960	\$23,196,500	
Professional Engineering (PE)	12			\$3,417,904
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)	5			\$97,767,738
Riparian Grant Program (RGP)	17	\$17,030,800		\$2,440,000
Riparian Plant Propagation Program (RPPP)	10	\$480,051		
Shellfish	5	\$2,269,000	\$3,278,000	
Sustainable Farms & Fields (SFF)	17	\$3,312,000	\$8,386,046	
Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)	14	\$3,290,000	\$5,697,500	
Washington State Restoration & Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI)	8	\$2,416,500	\$3,767,000	
Total		\$60,719,896	\$115,269,647	\$118,623,484

*RGP "other amount" represents permanent protection projects.