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WACD Legislative Update

March 27, 2023

This is WACD's **eleventh week** of legislative updates for 2023. The biennial budget proposals are now all public, with the House and the Senate both planning to vote their competing operating, capital, and transportation budgets this week and next before moving to reconciliation. The Commission is set to receive more funds to pass through to conservation districts but the clock is ticking, only 26 days remain.

1. Operating Budget

The House released their proposed FY24-25 operating budget at noon today, following the Senate's last Thursday. The Conservation Commission will have a definitive summation available [HERE](#) once their financial staff have the chance to dissect the 1200-page budget, but there are a few highlights ready to share this afternoon from the two operating budget proposals.

- \$10 million in new CTA (Conservation Technical Assistance) is included in the Senate version
- \$40 million for new riparian restoration projects is in the Senate version.
- There is \$22 million for anaerobic digesters in the House version.

2. Capital Budget

The Senate voted to approve their FY24-25 Capital Budget last Friday unanimously, while the House Capital Budget committee will hear public comment on their version on Tuesday, March 28th. The Conservation Commission will have a definitive summation available [HERE](#) after reviewing the 426 page House version released this afternoon, but there are a few highlights for conservation districts.

- There is \$15 million in the Senate version for CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program).
- The House version sets \$25 million aside for voluntary riparian restoration projects.
- There is \$3 million in both the House and Senate versions for new VSP project funding.

3. Buffer Letter Template

WACD was asked by districts earlier this month to write a template for those districts interested in writing to legislators to ask for additional assistance in the state budget for riparian restoration work. To that end, WACD created suggested language in a [Riparian Buffer Letter](#) that can serve as a starting point for your own district's letter.

4. Legislative Overview

WACD Lobbyist Brynn Brady detailed the major spending items in the proposed Senate Operating and Capital Budget items, along with the impact of the Washington State Supreme Court voting to uphold the constitutionality of the Capital Gains tax in *Quinn v. State of Washington*. You can [read her full review on the WACD Hub website](#).

5. Looking Ahead

It is the home stretch for the House and Senate committees for the year. This Wednesday the 29th is Policy Cut-Off for policy bills to be voted out of the opposite chamber from which they were introduced (House bills out of Senate committees and vice versa) and next Tuesday the 4th is Fiscal Cut-off where the same will apply to bills with a fiscal impact. The remainder of the year will be spent by each legislative body voting on legislation. The legislative session is scheduled to adjourn on April 23rd, also known as "*Sine Die*" for the parliamentary phrase taken from old Latin on the final adjournment of a legislative body.

Thank you Tom for providing the Legislative Update while I was in Washington D.C the last two weeks. - Ryan



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