



Washington Association of Conservation Districts

WACD 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION BUDGET PRIORITIES

	WSCC Request	Governor's Proposal	WACD Request
Conservation Technical Assistance	\$10,000,000	\$3,500,000	\$10,000,000
Voluntary Stewardship Program	0	0	\$5,000,000
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000
SCC Staff Needs	600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000

OPERATING BUDGET PRIORITIES

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA). Technical assistance funding increases participation rates in voluntary conservation programs on the more than 50% of Washington land that is privately owned. CTA ensures conservation districts have the capacity to provide support such as financial assistance, engineering project designs, assistance navigating permitting processes, and other services that empower landowners and others to conserve natural resources.

CAPITAL BUDGET PRIORITIES

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). State match for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) incentivizes innovation and allows Washington state to leverage much-needed federal Farm Bill dollars at a rate of \$5 for every \$1 of state funding.

Conservation districts have secured four grants totaling \$57.7 million in the most recent round of RCPP grants from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, with now seven active RCPPs spread across Washington State.

Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP). VSP needs support to transition the program from the work plan phase to the implementation and monitoring phase in the 27 counties enrolled in VSP. Primarily implemented by conservation districts, and tasked with protecting and enhancing critical areas in a non-regulatory manner where agricultural activity occurs, additional funding is necessary to implement projects identified by the local work groups.

SCC Staffing Needs. In the 2023-25 biennium, the State Conservation Commission received an increase of 44% in operating funding and 50% in capital funding. WACD lauds this investment in voluntary conservation practices and conservation districts but acknowledges the increased workload on current SCC staff. The agency expects to hire six full-time equivalent staff to ensure their continued high standard of service and accountability of public funds.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts

WACD 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION POLICY PRIORITIES

Conservation District Elections. WACD supports the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Elections — a combined effort of the State Conservation Commission and WACD — to modernize the election system while honoring the unique duties of these special purpose districts operating without taxing or regulatory authority. Recommendations include providing an option for districts to hold elections under Title 29A and holding elections every other year by extending the term of office to four years.

Voluntary Salmon Habitat Restoration. WACD supports injecting much-needed funding to meet the goals of salmon recovery without sacrificing the time-tested and effective voluntary conservation delivery system. The State Conservation Commission is the best vehicle for these grant funds because of the interagency character of the Commission and the strong, trust-based relationships between landowners and conservation districts.

Rate-Setting Authority. WACD seeks to amend the population criteria requirement in RCW.89.08.405 so that conservation districts can request adequate county funding that keeps in line with rising inflation and the increased costs of project implementation.

Project Planning & Design. WACD seeks to amend the proviso language of the Conservation Commission's Riparian Grant Program to include the funding of project planning and design. This is a crucial aspect of riparian restoration grants. The lack of funding support creates an unnecessary barrier to conservation districts in developing and implementing projects.

Rangeland Fire Protection District Pilot Project. WACD supports HB 1971 and future legislation that authorizes and supports the creation of rangeland fire protection districts in Washington State. Such entities are necessary to allow those on unprotected lands access to the training and equipment necessary for the detection, prevention, and suppression of wildfires.

Effective Management Plans. WACD supports increasing funding for public agencies and other entities that manage state lands to allow them to complete and implement their respective management plans.

Local Clean Energy Project Authority. WACD supports legislation that does not bypass local authority when siting new solar and wind installations and ensures sufficient environmental and habitat studies are conducted on the impact to shrub-steppe habitat.