



Washington Association of Conservation Districts

WACD 2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION POLICY PRIORITIES

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

Salmon Riparian Habitat. WACD supports HB 1215 to inject much-needed funding to meet the goals of salmon recovery without sacrificing the time-tested and effective voluntary conservation delivery system. The 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. Committing \$100 million to the Washington State Conservation Commission gives the voluntary approach the financial commitment to better achieving the desired outcome of improved salmon habitat.

Technical Assistance in Support of Improved Voluntary Stewardship. WACD supports SB 5484 and recognizes the need to increase conservation districts' ability to assist food producers and landowners in increasing energy efficiency and providing information on local, state, and federal funding opportunities to implement practices that help reduce the carbon footprint.

New Enrollment in the Voluntary Stewardship Program. WACD supports SB 5353 to provide counties with the ability to enroll in the Voluntary Stewardship Program, so long as existing county stewardship programs do not suffer a cut in the financial support necessary to protect critical areas.

Harmful Algae Blooms. WACD supports the recommendations of the Harmful Algae Bloom Work Group to address the lack of adequate monitoring and funding dedicated to reducing the frequency and duration of HABs. WACD seeks inclusion of a legislative proviso in 2023 for additional understanding of how Washington's natural resource agencies can tackle this resource challenge.

Agricultural Worker Overtime. WACD supports HB 1523 that reinstates the historic agricultural work exemptions from certain overtime standards during periods of harvest.

Stock Water Rights. WACD supports the need to clarify riparian stock watering rights. Removing the off-channel watering exemption would significantly impair the potential for voluntary water quality and riparian habitat protections. It jeopardizes the livestock grazing operations without previously documented water rights.



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WACD 2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION BUDGET PRIORITIES

	WSCC Request	Governor's Proposal	WACD Request
Conservation Technical Assistance	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000
Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resiliency	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000
Natural Resource Investments	\$9,800,000	\$4,000,000	\$9,800,000
Riparian Grant Program	\$0	\$100,000,000	\$100,000,000

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 like financial assistance, engineering project designs, assistance navigating permitting processes, and other services to empower landowners and others to conserve natural resources.

Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resiliency. This investment will mobilize local expertise within the conservation district community to assist private landowners statewide to enhance forest and rangeland stewardship, increase community wildfire resiliency, and recover natural resources and agriculture in burn areas.

CAPITAL BUDGET PRIORITIES

Natural Resource Investments (NRI). NRI funding provides critical financial incentives for water quality and habitat improvements on private lands. The capital costs go to the necessary materials and expensive equipment required to implement best management practices to achieve resource conservation.

Riparian Grant Program. The creation of a new riparian grant program housed within the Washington State Conservation Commission will allow for funding to be used to restore and protect critical habitat as well as improve water quality around the state. Reducing stream temperature, providing for water filtration, and offering cover for spawning are all necessary to restore salmon populations. This program will continue the work of the Riparian Task Force and reaches for more parity between voluntary and regulatory approaches.

Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board. WACD supports funding for this grant program as it provides funding for many conservation districts to identify and remove impediment to fish migration on private lands.