



CONSERVATION COMMISSION SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET– WACD PRIORITIES

	WSCC Request	Governor's Proposal	WACD Request
Community Resiliency - Wildfire	\$349,719	\$25,000	\$349,719
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) (to leverage federal funds)	\$2,248,152	\$2,249,000	\$2,249,000
Total Requested Funding	\$2,597,871	\$2,274,000	\$2,597,871

CAPITAL BUDGET PRIORITIES

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). RCPP funding is used to restore critical habitat and improve water quality around the state, and supports the work of over 50 partners (federal, state, tribal, local, and private) working together on six distinct projects: Yakima Integrated Plan; Upper Columbia River Irrigation Enhancement Project; Southwest Washington Non-Industrial Private Forest Lands Conservation Partnership; Puyallup Watershed Partnership; Palouse River Watershed Implementation Project; and the Greater Spokane River Watershed Project

In order to maximize federal Farm Bill dollars for RCPP projects (\$39 million in total federal dollars), we are greatly supportive of the \$2,249,000 in the Governor’s Capital Budget to support our regional partnership efforts to implement conservation practices and conserve farmland.

Community Resiliency – Wildfire. Without the full state match, Washington will not secure the full amount of available federal grant funding and will lose this chance to leverage additional federal and state dollars in better preparing our local communities for wildfires through grants and pilot projects done in coordination with the Department of Natural Resources.

OPERATING BUDGET PRINCIPLES

Though not a budget priority in this session, the Washington Association of Conservation Districts advocates for support of:

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA). Funding increases landowner participation rates in voluntary conservation programs. 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 to conserve natural resources.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The CREP program leverages federal Farm Bill dollars (\$0.20 state/\$0.80 federal) and is a critical funding mechanism for restoring riparian forested buffers and enhancing salmonid habitat on farms and ranches. Over the last twenty years, conservation districts have restored more than 13,500 acres of riparian forested buffers along salmon-bearing streams.



WACD 2020 LEGISLATIVE SESSION POLICY PRIORITIES

Special Purpose District Elections & Accountability. WACD supports the Conservation Commission's current process of broad stakeholder engagement to ensure election transparency, inclusivity, and efficiency in improving conservation district elections. Recognizing cost as a limiting factor is important for these non-partisan elections for volunteer positions.

WACD believes the values of financial transparency and accountability is paramount throughout the structures and practices currently in place. Districts must fully comply with the Commission's Conservation Accountability and Performance Program (CAPP) to receive state funds from the Commission. All conservation districts also submit to outside audits on a schedule set by the State Auditor. This effort has been recognized with the presentation of the State Auditor's Stewardship Award to districts (Snohomish Conservation District, 2016 award recipient) and the State Conservation Commission (2019 Award recipient).

Fish Habitat Enhancement Project Permitting. WACD supports passage of HB 1187 to revise hydraulic project eligibility standards for conservation district-sponsored fish habitat enhancement projects. This will increase permitting efficiencies and place conservation district-sponsored projects on the same level as those sponsored by other agencies or organizations.

On-Farm Renewable Energy & Soil Health. WACD supports increased adoption of soil health systems as well as the development and use of renewable energy sources by farmers and other landowners within the State of Washington. Conservation districts are integral to the delivery of technical and financial assistance on a voluntary basis, implementing soil health practices, and the development and implementation of on-farm renewable energy sources.

Community Forests. WACD supports the creation of a community forest program with the inclusion of conservation district eligibility and with a working lands philosophy. WACD endorses the goal of fostering equity and inclusion in community forest funding opportunities. The resulting program shall be developed to foster local leadership and management in rural communities.

Rangeland Fire Protection Districts. WACD supports HB 1188 and other legislation that authorizes and supports the creation of rangeland fire protection districts in Washington State to allow those on unprotected lands access to the training and equipment necessary for the detection, prevention, or suppression of wildfire.

Restricting Out of Basin Water Rights Transfers. WACD supports legislation and rulemaking, that restricts the transfer of water rights outside of the Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) in which they are originally located. The conversion of agricultural water rights to other uses poses a significant risk to the viability of agriculture and the conservation of natural habitat, particularly in arid areas of Washington State.