SCC’s Role

- Responsible for implementation of Office of Farmland Preservation (RCW 89.10)
- Recognizes ag easements as an important tool to assist in farmland protection and advancing conservation with willing landowners
- Authorized to hold conservation easements (RCW 64.04.130)
- Eligible to apply to RCO’s Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) (RCW 79A.15)
  - Districts are not eligible entities under WWRP program guidelines
- SCC Policy #19-02 “Agricultural Conservation Easement Sponsorship and Liability”
  - For WWRP funds, SCC “…will be the primary holder…and assume legal obligation to monitor and enforce the terms of the easement.”
What does it mean to hold an easement?

- Perpetual responsibility and obligation to ensure the purpose, intent, and terms of the conservation easement are honored over time.
- Real property interest with power to enforce consistency with the easement’s conservation objectives
- Management responsibilities include:
  - Annual monitoring and landowner relationship building
  - Maintaining permanent records including documentation of any changes relative to the baseline
  - Responding to landowner requests regarding consistency of proposed activities with easement (i.e. if something is allowed)
  - Determining if completed or ongoing activities align with easement purposes and negotiating a remedy, if necessary
  - Determining how/if proposed amendments impact conservation values (amendments are rare)
Schuster Ag Conservation Easement

- Developed by the Central Klickitat Conservation District
- Funding secured in 2016 WWRP grant round
- Transaction completed in April 2021
- SCC holds the easement, RCO is a 3rd party beneficiary, CKCD is subcontracted to support due diligence and landowner correspondence
Project Overview

• 1,849 acre property
• Beef cattle and dryland wheat
• Farm business established in 1900
Project Site: Schuster Hereford Ranch
## Easement Portfolio and Pipeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RCO Project #</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Easement Holder</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-1546</td>
<td>Thornton Ranch</td>
<td>SCC</td>
<td>Yakima</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>Funding secured, grant agreement pending</td>
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<td>Benton</td>
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<td>Lazy Cross Ranch</td>
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<td>Klickitat</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lust Farm</td>
<td>NYCD</td>
<td>Yakima</td>
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<td>Completed, SCC has 3rd party rights</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Resource Alignment with Growing Easement Portfolio

• Identifying ongoing costs for stewardship

• Developing and implementing easement project record keeping procedures:
  – Secure (fire safe, locked) storage with restricted access
  – Checklists
  – Required documentation

• Updating monitoring templates and procedures

• Developing monitoring agreements with local conservation districts
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