Message From Our Leaders

This past year reminded us that unexpected events may crest the horizon at any time. No matter the challenge, your conservation districts and Conservation Commission stand ready to work with you.

Read the full message (p. 2)

Feature Work From 2020

Salmon, Orca, and Shellfish
Restoring and enhancing the habitat our iconic and culturally significant species need to thrive.
Learn more (p. 4)

Working Lands and Forests
Engaging people with voluntary actions that support resource conservation and the viability of working lands.
Learn more (p. 5)

Climate Resiliency
Mitigating impacts of a changing climate so future generations enjoy the healthy resources they deserve.
Learn more (p. 6)

Food Security
Working to ensure all Washingtonian’s have reliable access to nutritious, affordable, Washington-grown food.
Learn more (p. 7)
Message From Our Leaders

Ready to Serve Our Communities and Natural Resources, No Matter What’s On the Horizon

2020 taught us many lessons, including this: At the end of the day, we can’t always see what’s on the horizon. We can plan. We can coordinate. But unexpected events may throw us off course or even into crisis.

We open our 2020 Annual Report with a message of thanks to the 45 conservation districts of Washington State who employed their unique strengths that make them particularly adept in times of change or crisis.

- They’re resolute. Driven by their unwavering commitment to their local communities, natural resources, and agriculture, conservation districts found innovative and safe ways to continue delivering their services throughout 2020. They hosted virtual workshops, conducted virtual site visits with landowners, and launched new communication outlets to stay connected with their community, such as Spokane Conservation District’s Rocks to Roots Podcast.

- They’re responsive. As community-based entities, conservation district staff and board members see first-hand when local needs change, and they adjust their services accordingly. That’s why Stevens County Conservation District was one of many conservation districts that modified their environmental education services in order to offer virtual learning opportunities for students. In 2020, Stevens County Conservation District started offering “Forestry at Home” — a series of hands-on science lessons for students to do safely from home, which included planting their own seedling trees.

- They’re nimble. Conservation districts’ locally led structure allows them to quickly take on critical new functions in emergency situations. In 2020, several conservation districts launched new services to mitigate the food system emergency that was triggered by COVID-19. For example, Thurston Conservation District launched The Farmer’s Basket: A Buyer’s Guide — a virtual farmers market that directly connects consumers with nutritious, locally grown food and supports agricultural viability by connecting Washington farmers with buyers.

This report provides examples of other accomplishments by conservation districts, the Washington State Conservation Commission, and our partners from fiscal year 2020. Accomplishments are organized under four topics: Salmon, Orca and shellfish; Working Lands and Forests; Climate Resiliency; and Food Security.

None of this would be possible without the many Washingtonians who voluntarily take action on their properties and in their communities to keep our natural resources and farmland healthy for all. We owe the biggest thanks to you.

No matter what’s on the horizon, Washington’s conservation districts and Conservation Commission stand ready to work with and serve you. We hope you join us!

Please contact your local conservation district to learn what you can do to be part of this voluntary conservation movement.

Want to learn more about the State Conservation Commission and conservation districts? Please visit our website (scc.wa.gov).

Chair Dean Longrie and Executive Director Carol Smith
**2019-2020 State Operating Budget**

- **SCC Administration / Conservation District Operations** - $13,551,322 (includes 15% reduction for state COVID recovery)
- **Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)** - $8,456,000
- **Conservation Technical Assistance: Salmon and Orca** - $1,000,000
- **Pension Funding Stabilization Acct Salaries and Expenses** - $254,000
- **Washington Food Policy Forum** - $159,000
- **Other** - Sustainable Farms and Fields ($99,000); Soil Health Initiative ($55,000); Review of Grant Programs ($20,000)

Total: **$23.5M**

---

**2019-2020 Capital Budget**

- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program: State Match** - $6,249,000
- **Irrigation Efficiencies Program** - $4,000,000
- **Natural Resource Investments** - $4,000,000
- **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program: Contract Funding and Cost Share State Match** - $3,700,000
- **Shellfish Program** - $3,000,000
- **Toxics** - $1,000,000

*Not including reappropriations from 2017-19*

Total: **$21.9M**

---

Want to learn more about our budget? Please contact Sarah Groth (sgroth@scc.wa.gov, 360-407-6205)

- Back to Annual Report Index -
Each year the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) and conservation districts work together to voluntarily engage people with actions that benefit salmon, orca, and shellfish. Fiscal year 2020 was no different — we empowered thousands of people to contribute to the recovery of these iconic species by practicing conservation on their land and in their communities.

Examples of Our Work in Fiscal Year 2020

Launched by conservation districts in 2018, annual Orca Recovery Day events continue to engage thousands of volunteers with actions that benefit orca. In fiscal year 2020, these events spread from Washington-specific to multi-state and multi-country efforts, with participants from Oregon, California, and British Columbia. Watch this video to get a glimpse of these events and the results.

In the Dungeness River basin, Clallam Conservation District partnered with two irrigation water purveyors to pipe nearly 20,000 feet of open irrigation ditches. Projects will preserve two cubic feet per second of water in salmon streams — enough to fill two Olympic-size swimming pools a day.

Walla Walla County Conservation District captured progress made over time in Dry Creek for salmon recovery. Farmers voluntarily have planted over six contiguous miles of trees and vegetation along this salmon-bearing stream through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Aerial images show trees have matured, creating a buffer that filters contaminants and shades the creek, among other benefits.

Snohomish Conservation District used the SCC Shellfish Program to provide funding and technical expertise to assist a livestock and grain operation with projects that more safely convey, store, and treat manure. Once complete, the projects will prevent nutrients and bacteria from reaching shellfish growing areas in Possession Sound.

Want to learn more about our work for salmon, orca, and shellfish? Please contact Alison Halpern (ahalpern@scc.wa.gov, 360-280-5556)
By keeping our working lands working, we preserve all the ecological and economic benefits those lands provide, from fish and wildlife habitat to jobs. That’s why the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) and conservation districts strive to engage working farm and forest owners with win-win solutions that support resource conservation and enhance the viability of their operations.

Examples of Our Work in Fiscal Year 2020

The SCC Office of Farmland Preservation and North Yakima Conservation District submitted a successful Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grant application to secure an agricultural easement on a Centennial Farm in the Cowiche Valley. Farm owners voluntarily sold the easement to permanently restrict development and preserve the farm and the ecological services it provides. Learn more.

Conservation districts received SCC Natural Resource Investment funding to cover a portion of the cost for landowners to construct over 100 natural resource projects. For example, Kittitas County Conservation District helped a landowner convert inefficient irrigation to a sprinkler system that saves water and reduces erosion.

As part of the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP), Thurston Conservation District helped several landowners develop stewardship plans for their properties, including owners of an alpaca farm in the Nisqually watershed. As advised in their plan, the owners constructed a covered facility to store manure away from precipitation and minimize runoff. Learn more about the District’s role in VSP.

The SCC provided match to secure federal funds for the SW Washington Small Forest Lands Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Partners—including conservation districts and the Dept. of Fish & Wildlife—assist forest landowners with habitat, water quality, resiliency, and keeping working forests working.

Want to learn more about what we do for working lands and forests? Please contact Ron Shultz (rshultz@scc.wa.gov, 360-790-5994).

- Back to Annual Report Index -
Conservation districts and the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) offer a range of services to mitigate impacts from changes in weather and climate. From engaging residential communities with wildfire preparedness, to supporting farmers with adopting practices that capture carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we’re working for a safe and resilient Washington.

Examples of Our Work in Fiscal Year 2020

In its sixth year, the Palouse River Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program (led by Palouse Conservation District) reported that farmers enrolled in their program have switched from traditional tillage to conservation tillage on over 80 square miles of land (almost the size of Seattle). Conservation tillage improves soil carbon retention and minimizes carbon emissions from soils.

In its 21st year, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) reported that Washingtonians voluntarily have planted six million trees along salmon streams on agricultural land through this program. The trees not only provide habitat and clean, cool water for salmon, they also sequester carbon.

Conservation districts help communities prepare for the increasing risk of wildfire. In 2020, Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD) participated in a NW Washington Fire Adapted Communities Workshop that united wildfire practitioners in developing ideas for a cohesive regional wildfire outreach strategy. View workshop highlights and WICD’s Wildfire Preparedness Resources.

Whatcom Conservation District partnered with Washington State University to install five AgWeatherNet stations. Data is publicly available and will greatly increase local understanding of soil and water relationships in an effort to track drought conditions and promote more efficient use of irrigation water.

Want to learn more about what we do for climate resiliency? Please contact Alison Halpern (ahalpern@scc.wa.gov, 360-280-5556)

- Back to Annual Report Index -
We work to ensure all Washingtonians have reliable access to nutritious, affordable, Washington-grown food. As the COVID-19 crisis impacted food access and the viability of farming operations, the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) and many conservation districts stepped up efforts to strengthen the systems that bring food produced by our farmers to consumers’ plates.

Examples of Our Work in Fiscal Year 2020

The Spokane Conservation District launched the South Spokane Food Corridor to promote access to locally grown food and the nutritional, environmental, and economic value of buying sustainably produced farm products. It’s sponsored by the Spokane County Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP). VSP is administered at the state-level by the SCC. Learn more about the program on our website.

The SCC Office of Farmland Preservation published the 3rd edition of the Washington State Farmland Preservation Indicators Report. The report compiles data to track trends, conditions, concerns, and opportunities related to farm viability and the future of agriculture in our state.

The Washington State Food Policy Forum (administered by the SCC and Dept. of Agriculture) published an Early Actions Report that identifies 1) challenges to our food system caused by COVID-19, and 2) actions to keep our food system functioning for all. Recommended actions include things like Snohomish Conservation District’s work to start community gardens in food desert regions (pictured).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Clark Conservation District launched Clark Farm 2 Go — a web-based listing of local farms offering produce, meat, dairy, and more for pick up and delivery. It connects farmers and consumers, strengthening the local food system and food accessibility.

Want to learn more about what we do for food security? Please contact Ron Shultz (rshultz@scc.wa.gov, 360-790-5994).