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5-Year Plan (2009 to 2014)
Clark Conservation District

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Mission of the Clark Conservation District

Mission of the Clark Conservation District is to assist land users and others to protect, conserve, and manage water quality, soils, and natural habitat areas of the District to benefit present and future generations.

Function of the Clark Conservation District

To provide technical, financial and educational resources and coordinate them to meet the needs of the local landowner and others for the conservation of natural resources.

Long Range Vision of the Clark Conservation District

The Board of Supervisors recognizes that our quality of life is dependent on our natural resources; not only for a place to live; but for economic growth and sustainability, through resource development, restoration, and conservation.

Description of the Clark Conservation District

- Clark Conservation District is located in southwestern Washington. Its boundaries are the Columbia River on the south and west, the Lewis River to the north, and the foothills of the Cascade Range on the east. The overall area is nearly 656 square miles, of which 28 square miles are water. Clark County is the most rapidly developing county in the state, due in part to its proximity to the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area.
- A non-regulatory subdivision of the State of Washington – authorities, powers and structure contained in RCW 89.08.

Natural Resource Data:

In general, urban growth and development, construction of residential homes, industry, schools, etc., along with the associated support systems of roads, parks and utilities, are increasing pressure on the resources of this county. Land users will need educational and technical assistance in conserving natural resources for a rapidly changing landscape.

Water Resources

- In July of 2006, the Troutdale Aquifer system in Clark County was determined by the EPA to be a Designated Sole Source Aquifer, providing for federal oversight of projects in majority of the District.
- There are sixteen separate drainage basins and more than 100 ponds and lakes within the District.

Fish Resources

- Clark County is in the Lower Columbia Evolutionarily Significant Unit. Stream basins provide spawning grounds for five salmon or trout species listed as either endangered or threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Timber Resources

- More than half the District is currently in woodland use, either commercially or otherwise. Of this woodland, more than 80 percent is in private ownership.

Plant and Wildlife Resources

- Wildlife is an important renewable resource of the District. Habitat is continually lost by land use conversion from natural characteristics to urban and suburban development, along with damage to wetlands and prairies from siltation, land filling, and excessive human traffic.

Critical Geographic Areas: (attached map)

- Whipple Creek (Existing highest % of agriculture / open lands that are in production & highly erodible lands)
- East Fork Lewis River
- Salmon Creek
- Critical habitat areas

Trends Impacting Conservation in the Clark Conservation District

- Decreasing agricultural land
- Increasing value of agricultural land
- Increase need for statistics on type, and use of agricultural land
- Decrease in land management experience among land owners/managers
- Increase in development and population growth
- Increase restrictions on funding sources including restrictions on administrative/infrastructure costs
- Increase in interest for buying locally grown produce & increase in farmers market
- Declining water quality
- Increase in "city" influence in agriculture and natural decision making
- Increase in community support agriculture

Strategies to Address Trends

- Education for existing agriculture land owners regarding tools on keeping land in agriculture – development rights, easements, etc
- Provide financial support for keeping viable agriculture lands – land banks, conservation easement, aging equipment, new technology, buffering pressures from developers
- Make available conservation equipment or revolving loan for purchase equipment through the district
- Supporting local growers with marketing and/or business classes – with Extension
- Have a spot and presenter on the agenda – "Living on the Land Series" and other programs
- Educational campaign for the importance of farm lands "Lovin the Living Land"
- Farm planning activities – emphasis on action, follow-up, practical approaches, maximize ownership through involvement in planning process, making available the "tools" for implementing, demonstration sites
- Training in stewardship and growing compatible to Clark County – e.g. native plants, new plantings, how to maintain and enhance
- Utilize local students (e.g. science center) and/or WA Conservation Corp as a conservation Corp or farm Corp program – school credit, etc.
- Lesson plan for all 3rd or 4th graders learning Clark County conservation needs
- Supporting the existing Community Supported Agriculture groups
- Any soil disturbance in the County will need to have a sediment / erosion control plan from the Clark CD
- Education program for developers & realtors – soils, excavation, erosion control
- Forest land management technical assistance for small forest acreages
- Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application (JARPA) streamlined permitting assistance

Program Priorities (in order of importance)

- Conservation Planning & Assistance
- Animal Agriculture
- Farmland Preservation
- Engineering Services
- Septic System Assistance
- Conservation Grants

Conservation Information & Education (as part of all above)
District Operations

Strategies & Priority Actions:

Water Quality (stormwater, water leaving property, infiltration issues, contaminants, septics, sediments)

- By February 2014 will have demonstrated improvement in any water quality parameters in major streams and tributaries in Clark County including a measurable improvement in Salmon Creek; through assistance to 30 septic tank owners, 165 engineering services provided, 50% of the animal agriculture landowners assisted, 1500 conservation practices voluntarily applied, and all the owners of properties on or adjacent to Salmon Creek and its major tributaries have been contacted and offered assistance from our programs

  Strategies:
  - develop an outreach effort to reach 120 animal agriculture producers per year
  - work with the health department to identify failing septic systems for grant support
  - with the land trusts, WRIA planning unit develop a grant funding program for conservation grants
  - develop water quality parameter baseline

  Key Decision Makers:
  - Clark County ESA Program
  - Clark County Conservation Lands
  - Clark Public Utilities
  - Clark County Public Health

  Actions:
  - Complete work on assessment activity
  - Develop a septic system program with the County Health
  - Start the water quality baseline data gathering – by May 08

Habitat (loss or changes in critical & unique habitats, connectivity, native wildlife & plants, wetland)

- By February 2014 find or create a program with funding for upland wildlife habitat restoration and protection on 50 acres; riparian area enhancement on 5 miles of stream including fisheries habitat in multiple mile reaches (highest priority private & county ownership) in the East Fork Lewis River for steelhead spawning, rearing and holding areas.

  Strategies:
  - Identify key riparian habitats for improvement
  - Identify 50 acres critical upland habitat

  Key Decision Makers:
  - WA Dept of Fish & Wildlife
  - Clark County Wildlife Club
  - Clark County ESA Program
  - Fish First
  - Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board

  Actions:
  - Meet with stakeholder groups to develop the habitat improvement activities, explore options and opportunities to partner
  - Identify habitat recommendations with the key decision makers, then prioritize
  - Begin contacting the land owners of the priority areas

Land Use (open space, open lands, farm land & forest land preservation, soil productivity, intensive land use, development issues, maximize the working lands capacity)

- By February 2014 all farmland is accurately inventoried with 6 farms approximately 400 acres enrolled in a farmland preservation program;

  Strategies:
  - Work with the county conservation lands office on the collection of data on land use
  - Develop a farmland preservation program that meets the needs of local land owners and partners

Key Decision Makers:
- Clark CD Board
- Board of County Commissioners
- Clark County Conservation Lands

Actions:
- Work with county on the Whipple Creek data on farmland
- Develop priority criteria in the program regarding which land owners to approach
- Gather information on farmland, verify the information and fill gaps
- Hold community meetings
- Research funding sources and program options

Education- Information

- Develop a comprehensive information and educational program to inform citizens about natural resource capabilities and limitations, existing resource programs, conservation by incentive, and proper use and treatment of resources.
- Stimulate appreciation of the value of a strong resource base with renewable, natural resources, particularly among those who do not directly manage land. Both students and adults will be addressed.
- By February 2014 reach 400 citizens annually with conservation education activities

  Strategies:
  - Fair booth displays – changing and adding technology – interactive
  - Workshops increased and tailor topics to targeted groups
  - New ways to connect to public – going to businesses and hosting questions and answer activity

  Key Decision Makers:
  - Board and staff of specific of community groups – Naturally Beautiful Backyards, Naturescaping, Native Plant Society emphasis on plants, native plants

  Actions:
  - Booth display – interactive attention getters – fair, home & garden fair, horse EXPO, small acreage EXPO
  - Hold workshops for targeted groups – focus on native plants
  - Booth at local feed stores
  - Create a resource library – clearing house of data, information, tools

Staffing Needs

Summary of the staff positions needed to carry out the plan of the Clark Conservation District: District Manager, Financial Administrator, Resource Planner, Resource Technician, Information and Education Coordinator, Engineering Technician, and GIS/ IT Technician.

Annual Budget Needs

The annual budgets needed to carry out the plan of the Clark Conservation District based on the above information are attached to this document.

Priority Actions – 12 Months

The Annual Plan of Work is attached for reference.

Washington Conservation Districts assisting land managers with their conservation choices