



## **5-Year Plan (2007 to 2012) Cowlitz Conservation District**

**For More Information Contact: CCD at (360) 425-1880**



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### **Organization of the Cowlitz Conservation District**

The Cowlitz Conservation District is a local government and political subdivision of the State of Washington with authorities, powers and structure contained in RCW 89.08.

The Cowlitz Conservation District was organized in 1945 at the request of individual farmers and the Diking District Commissioners.

Prior to the development of the Conservation District, educational meetings were held at the local Grange Halls as well as in the urban communities. Following these meetings, petitions requesting establishment of a Soil Conservation District were circulated and then sent to the State Conservation Commission for their approval. A hearing was held in Kelso on December 27, 1945, where local landowners voiced their opinions in favor of establishing a Conservation District. The Commission set the boundaries of the proposed District and ordered a referendum be held in favor of the establishment of the District. Under this original action, the District encompassed approximately 270,760 acres of Cowlitz County.

In March, 1963, the Conservation District Board petitioned the Conservation Commission to annex within their boundaries 76,000 acres of the northwest portion of the county. The petition was approved bringing the total number of acres within the District to 346,760.

On February 1, 1980, the easterly 53 percent of the land in Cowlitz County was included within the boundaries of the Cowlitz Conservation District outside incorporated areas as of 1945. Petitions for the inclusion of these additional territories were circulated for signatures of land occupants. The task of completing the inclusion of the east half of the county was given high priority by the District Board. The District encompasses all lands within the county boundaries, outside incorporated areas.

[The District is] governed by a board of five supervisors, three of whom are elected by residents within the District and two are appointed by the State Conservation Commission. The board may also include an unlimited number of associate members. All of the member's time and effort serving the District is on a volunteer basis.

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### **Function of the Cowlitz Conservation District**

To coordinate the delivery of and maintain the District's capacity to provide technical assistance to landowners within the district promoting sound resource management.

- Provide technical assistance to walk-in and call-in customers, provide site visits, and prepare conservation plans that make efficient and effective use of the landowners' resources.
- Assist in the delivery of current financial assistance programs, and technical assistance from our conservation partners.
- The District obtains funds through local, state, and federal grants, in-kind contributions, and cost-share from public and private entities.

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## **Who We Serve and Why**

Land users in need of assistance in conservation and development of their resources may seek assistance from the District. Assistance is offered equally on a voluntary basis to all users of resources without regard to race, creed, or gender.

Those expressing need become cooperators of the District by entering into a cooperative agreement with the District. This sets the stage for the District to help the landuser develop a conservation plan based on an inventory of the resources, assessment of the resource capabilities and limitations, and desires or goals of the resource user.

Help provided by the District in this planning process is extended by professional and technical specialists from various agencies, both public and private, who assist the District through a memorandum of understanding.

The District also assists landusers in complying with regulatory programs administered by local, state, and federal authorities. Although the Conservation District has no stand alone regulatory authority it is officially recognized by such agencies as a local source of help to people required to comply with environmental laws, rules, and regulations.

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## **Mission of the Cowlitz Conservation District**

Working voluntarily with our citizens and other organizations, Cowlitz Conservation District will conserve and improve the natural resources within the District and guide resource development and use to provide the highest quality of life for present and future citizens.

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## **Vision of the Cowlitz Conservation District**

“Over the next five years, we see the Cowlitz Conservation District will assist Landowners by:

- Providing high standards of service for our customers;
- Having stable financial backing to serve local needs;
- Strengthening our partnerships with other natural resource organizations, both governmental and non-governmental;
- Becoming locally perceived as the county leader for natural resource issues; and
- Developing our locally-led watershed planning process throughout the District.”

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## **Values of the Cowlitz Conservation District**

- Education of local land users on conservation practices by means of technical assistance.
- Sound resource management for agriculture, forestry, and other land uses emphasizing soil, water, air, plants, animals and human considerations.
- Economic viability for community and landowners.

- **Monitor and encourage the use of new or technical developments that offer promise toward enhancing conservation of natural resources, or improving the quality of our resources.**

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## **Natural Resource Priorities and Goals:**

**In addition, the Cowlitz County Conservation District Supervisors have the following specific policies regarding natural resources within the District:**

- **Encourage the retention of high quality forest land for forestry and related uses and promote forest management practices that are ecologically and economically sound.**
- **Encourage the retention of prime and unique agriculture land for agriculture use and promote agriculture management practices that are ecologically and economically sound.**
- **Encourage the management of wetlands in a manner that will retain their value and function.**
- **Provide the County Commissioners and local planners with resource data and interpretations to assist them in making sound land use decisions.**
- **Maintain a strong program to keep the public informed of conservation needs, benefits, and progress.**
- **Actively encourage an education program in Cowlitz County schools that will introduce students to natural resources conservation.**
- **Provide technical assistance in the reduction of erosion-sedimentation.**
- **Encourage cooperative planning among agencies involved in land use activities in both urban and rural areas.**
- **Assist landowners, land managers, and resource agencies with coordinated watershed management plans that are ecologically and economically sound.**
- **Promote conservation and responsible use of water resources.**

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## **Critical Geographic Areas**

**The Lower Columbia Region Salmon Recovery Plan identifies geographic (watersheds) areas that have been ranked according to their potential priority for recovery and sustaining populations of listed salmonids.**

**The WRIA 25, 26, and 27 draft watershed plans identify critical geographic areas (watersheds) with respect to available water supplies.**

**The Federal Clean Water Act 303 (d) maintained by Washington State Department of Ecology identifies critical geographic areas within the county with respect to water quality.**

**Prime farmland within the county is under increased pressure for conversion to urban and industrial use (“Woodland Bottoms”)**

**The Conservation District has conducted several surveys and public outreach forums that have identified additional areas that could be deemed critical geographic areas from a variety of perspective including landowner issues, invasive weeds (including noxious and invasive), instream habitat (both resident and anadromous fisheries), and land use concerns.**

**Sustaining Non-Industrial and Industrial forested lands in Cowlitz County. Currently, 85% of Cowlitz County land use is dominated by forest, which is under tremendous economic pressure due to fragmentation and poor planning, for conversion to uses other than forestry.**

### **Matrix of Watersheds**

**To assist the district with conservation programs a watershed matrix has been developed that is intended to provide a quick overview of local watersheds. The matrix includes physical data about**

each watershed along with qualitative information regarding critical geographic areas discussed above. The matrix is provided in Appendix B.

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### **Information and Education Priorities and Goals:**

**Continue providing community service activities and promote an understanding of land use through sponsorship of forums, meetings, training sessions, participation in local natural resources oriented events, and use of local media.**

- **The Conservation District in cooperation with Longview School District, Toutle/Woodland School District, and local 4-H has developed school curriculum that meets WA State essential learning requirements that can be applied to the natural setting. This curriculum is being applied by classrooms and kids groups throughout the county in the field. (Watershed Voyages)**
- **The Conservation District will partner with Department of Natural Resources Stewardship Forestry Program and Small Forest Landowners Office to continue to delivery of forestry, technical, educational, and financial assistance. (Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Course)**
- **The Conservation District will continue to partner with WSU Cooperative Extension to host the “Living off the Land” course and other educational activities.**
- **The Conservation District will successfully partner to conduct the education/outreach activities including regional Envirothon, county fair, and the annual dinner meeting/banquets.**
- **Continue to participate when possible in local activities oriented around natural resources (e.g. earth day celebrations, classroom partnerships, and assistance to student groups for tree planting days, annual tree sale)**
- **The Conservation District will continue to partner with Cowlitz Farm Forestry Association in an effort to generate and award natural resource education scholarships for activities such as Natural Resources Youth Camp, Temperate Forest Program, and Envirothon.**
- **Additional effort will be given toward the use of field trips and use of local media to convey conservation activities and opportunities to the community.**
- **Conservation District staff in concert with our resource partners (DNR, NRCS) will continue to provide education and technical assistance to Cowlitz County landowners as needed.**

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## District Operations Priorities, Goals:

- The District goals are to be effective and efficient in accounting, grant vouchering, personnel management, Supervisor elections & appointments, Supervisor & Staff training / development, annual audits, and long range & annual planning & reporting. Cowlitz Conservation District will properly manage public monies.
- Increase efficiency of District Operations resulting in conservation on the ground. Continue to promote the concept of a natural resource “One-Stop Center” for natural resource needs. Coordinate with NRCS, WSU Cooperative Extension, DNR Stewardship, WDFW, DOE, Cowlitz County Weed Control Board and others.
- The District will continue to be good stewards of District owned lands.

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## Trends Impacting Conservation in the Cowlitz Conservation District

Population continues to rise in rural Cowlitz County resulting in changing land use, fragmentation into smaller parcel sizes, and increased number of landowners who may not be aware of existing rules & regulations and may be uninformed regarding best management practices. Changing regulations, Clean Water Act (CWA) & Endangered Species Act (ESA) enforcement regulations and requirements demand the increasing need for approved landowner plans.

Grants are becoming increasingly more competitive and diverse; therefore, it is becoming harder to obtain funding for projects. The district is at risk of being directed by funding rather than local need.

Increased grant sources or program sources is resulting in increased administration and the need for the districts to begin partnering with neighboring districts in order to obtain funds necessary to staff a position to meet program needs. There is a concern that the District is no longer looking after county needs, but administering to state programs over multiple counties (i.e. CREP, Livestock).

We recognize the need for our district to become proactive and adopt a legislative strategy if the district intends to comply with provisions of RCW 89.08 and address the natural resource needs within Cowlitz County.

Limited funding is available to sustain the level of staff necessary to adequately coordinate, plan, design, and implement projects within our district.

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## Strategies to Address Trends

### Conservation Strategy

- Continue with watershed planning effort and Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) principles, in the Coweeman, Mill, Abernathy, and Arkansas watersheds.
- Secure funding to meet local Landuser needs.

### Population Strategy –

- Maintain current data to keep abreast of growth trends.
- Develop and implement activities to educate and inform “new” landowners.

### Funding Strategy –

- Make District more attractive to local government(s) and agencies to secure local funding.

- **Continue to develop and build working with local partnerships.**
- **Provide guidance to WSCC in the development of funding proposals so that districts may better accomplish their local mission**
- **Continue developing funding proposals to granting entities to advance the district's goals and objectives**

**Legislative strategy –**

- **Pursue a Legislative Resolution to evaluate state grant strategy vs. intentions. There are increasing numbers of granting entities resulting in less flexibility at resolving local issues and increased administration and project costs.**
- **Develop a district strategy to effectively engage local, state, and federal elected officials with regards to conservation issues.**

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**Staffing Needs**

- **District Manager**
- **Bookkeeper**
- **Resource Planner / Technician**
- **Engineer or Engineer Technician**
- **Education/Outreach Program Coordinator**

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**Annual Budget Needs**

**Current Budget needs \$197,000.00/year.**

**Anticipated Operating Budget based on desired staffing and full office space - \$350,000/year.**

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**Key Decision Makers**

**Board of Supervisors, District Manager, Grantees, and local landowners.**

**Priority Actions – 12 Months**

- Enter a summary of the priority actions needed to start the 5-year plan of the XYZ Conservation District based on the above information.

	<b>Action</b>		<b>Begin Date</b>		<b>End Date</b>
<b>I</b>	<p><b>Support WSCC Budget:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Legislative support, “Day on the Hill”</li> <li>➤ Phone tree / Chain = Howard or Darin ⇒ (action) call Other Supervisors ⇒ call Legislators in 18<sup>th</sup> &amp; 19<sup>th</sup> Districts</li> </ul> <p>Discussion: How do we stay informed? Who will digest info, pass on hot topics?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ WACD (John Larson)</li> <li>➤ Or Area Director (Ann Tuning, Lewis CD or Terri Willis Grays Harbor CD)</li> </ul> <p>Suggested Follow Up: Legislative meeting with other CD’s in the 18/19<sup>th</sup> Districts</p>		02/2007		
<b>II</b>	<p><b>Local Funding Proposal(s): (5yr)</b></p> <p>Seek local contributions, cash or in-kind, that will assist the district with its mission</p>		Work 2007		Budget 2008
<b>III</b>	<p><b>Explore Assessment Possibility:</b></p> <p>WACD currently writing a rule package / how to do it guide.</p>		May 2007		
<b>IV</b>	<p><b>County Wide Meetings:</b></p> <p>Board could run meetings to identify new resource concerns</p>		2007		
<b>V</b>	<p><b>Watershed Projects:</b></p> <p>Coweeman River Mill / Abernathy / Germany</p>	<p><b>07</b> M/A/G <b>08</b> M/A/G <b>09</b> ----- <b>10</b> ----- <b>11</b> -----</p>	<p><b>Pre-plan</b> M/A/G C M/A/G M/A/G -----</p>	<p><b>Planning</b> C C M/A/G M/A/G -----</p>	<p><b>Implement</b> C C C M/A/G C M/A/G C M/A/G</p>
<b>VI</b>	<p><b>Meet with County Commissioners Annually</b></p> <p>Office / Field trips</p>		06/2007		

**Washington Conservation Districts assist land managers with their conservation choices**



**Priority Actions – (Refer to Annual Plan)12 Months**

- Enter a summary of the priority actions needed to start the 5-year plan of the XYZ Conservation District based on the above information.

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Begin Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>
<b>VII</b>	<b>Education</b> <b>Who:</b> Community Leaders, Landowners, Students, Educators/Teachers <b>How:</b> Twilight Tours, Innovative Projects, Publish Newsletter	<b>5/2007</b>	
<b>VIII</b>	<b>Hire Staff:</b> ➤ Engineer ➤ Planner	07/2007 12/2007	
<b>IX</b>	<b>Continue Capacity to assist walk-ins</b>		
<b>X</b>	<b>TSP</b>		
<b>XI</b>	<b>Participate in WACD Committees</b> District Operations (phone, E*mail) Forestry AFO / CAFO		
<b>XII</b>	<b>Support Partners:</b> DNR, WSU Ext., USFS, County Weed Brd., NRCS Legislative support: Calls letters		
<b>XIII</b>	<b>Continue to seek funding to maintain the district capacity to provide technical, educational, and financial assistance to district cooperators.</b> Apply for WSCC program funds Apply for GSRO project funds (Zmrhal Phase II) Apply for DOE CCWF (small farms) Work with Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board to develop priorities and plan projects in the Mill, Abernathy, and Germany Creek watersheds	<b>6/07</b> <b>5/07</b> <b>10/07</b> <b>6/07</b>	

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