



Washington State  
**CONSERVATION  
COMMISSION**

## **Conservation District Efficiencies**

**Outlining opportunities to minimize conservation districts' overhead costs, including consolidation of conservation districts within counties in which there is more than one district.**

Report to the Office of Financial Management and  
Legislative Fiscal Committees

December 2013

## Publication and Contact Information

This report is available on the State Conservation Commission's website at [www.scc.wa.gov](http://www.scc.wa.gov)

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## Executive Summary

The 2013-15 Operating Budget for the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) includes the following proviso:

*Within the amounts appropriated in this section, the conservation commission, in consultation with conservation districts, must submit to the office of financial management and legislative fiscal committees by December 10, 2013, a report outlining opportunities to minimize districts' overhead costs, including consolidation of conservation districts within counties in which there is more than one district. The report must include details on the anticipated future savings that could be expected from implementing these efficiencies starting on July 1, 2014.*

Administrative cost reductions brought about over the past 3 years have resulted in time and funding resources redirected toward the conservation services provided to local land owners/operators.

Current state funding represents only 43.7% of the funding needed for the 45 Conservation Districts and Conservation Commission to carry out the conservation program delivery needed in Washington State. Therefore, any future 'savings' from administrative efficiencies will be invested toward the current funding shortfall for providing critical conservation technical, financial, and educational services to local land owners/managers needed to conserve the natural resources of Washington State.

Since the formation of Conservation Districts and Conservation Commission in 1939, land owners and managers across Washington State have received technical, financial and educational services to plan and implement conservation systems with a basis of voluntary participation and with the request and consent of the land owner/operator. From 97 conservation districts formed over the years, the current number of Conservation Districts is 45.

## **Background**

The Conservation Commission and Conservation Districts have been actively implementing methods of administrative cost reduction including self-initiated consolidation throughout their history particularly intense efforts to improve district efficiencies over the past four years. Efficiencies derived have been invested back into the conservation delivery system, improving conservation districts' capacity to respond to increased citizen demands for conservation technical services and implementation of conservation systems across Washington State.

Conservation Districts are political subdivisions of state government operating locally in Washington with the purpose of helping land users conserve natural resources. In total there are 265 staff throughout the state helping our citizens to manage and protect the state's natural resources on private land. The 45 districts are guided by 230 elected and appointed board members (Supervisors) who provide expertise and governance while giving their time, without pay, in this effort to help protect our state's natural resources. Conservation Districts historically have fulfilled a unique role in conservation accomplishments through their strong working relationship at the local level with landowners and land managers. This relationship and importance of their local governance structure coupled with local, state, federal, and private partnerships and district operations accountability have led to the successful conservation of natural resources, through incentive-based programs and services delivered by local Conservation Districts.

In the 1930's and 40's, 97 Conservation Districts were formed in Washington State, based on communities of landowners with common interests. The formation of a district was based on 25 land owners petitioning to form a district on boundaries defined by the landowners petitioning for the Conservation District, and approved by the State Conservation Commission.

In the 2011-13 Biennial Budget there was a \$400,000 reduction to the Conservation Commission budget and a proviso for the Conservation Commission to conduct activities to reduce administrative overhead in Conservation Districts and the Conservation Commission including consideration of district consolidation. The three-year Commission and district-led effort to promote and implement best practices in reducing administrative overhead has produced results that have increased conservation work done in our state. However, the current state budget provides only 43.7% of the budget request for conservation work by the Conservation Commission and Conservation Districts in our State. Therefore savings realized from administrative cost reductions through efficiencies have been utilized to support conservation services and programs for land managers wanting to continue their conservation treatments.

This report includes summary information and supporting materials describing past and current activities to reduce administrative overhead in the Conservation Districts and Conservation Commission.

## Conservation Districts Consolidation Activities to Date

Since 1939, a total of 97 Conservation Districts have been formed throughout the state by petition of landowners. As a result of consolidations occurring over time, today there are 45 Conservation Districts. The consolidations that have occurred have been self-initiated by local Conservation District board requests to the State Conservation Commission. Numerous factors have contributed to the requests for consolidation, including efficiencies, budgets, conservation services, natural resource physical boundaries and concerns, transportation and service delivery costs, land uses, governance, citizen involvement and interest. A historical summary of consolidations that have occurred to date is included in this report as *Appendix A*. Of the 45 Conservation Districts in existence today, 33 share the same boundaries as their respective counties.

In contrast, active Conservation District boards that are governing active conservation programs and services delivery are not requesting consolidation with another district and have no logical reason to do so.

While discussions have been held about basing Conservation District boundaries on county boundaries, there is no direct correlation in the effectiveness of program and services delivery of Conservation Districts tied to county boundaries. Nor is there a direct correlation between the geographic size of a district and its effectiveness in delivering conservation programs and services. In addition to the many effective and efficient Conservation Districts that are based on county boundaries, we have other, equally as effective and efficient districts that include a sub-area of a county or parts of two counties. Washington State's diversity presents both an opportunity and challenge to meet the natural resource needs of any area of our state.

As an example of where county boundaries are not a logical structure for some conservation districts, the Underwood CD was formed originally in the Underwood area and later added all of Skamania County and part of western Klickitat County. The current boundaries of Underwood CD represents a logical area of natural resource needs including hills, plateaus, canyons, etc. that vary widely between White Salmon and Goldendale, along with the varying climatic/environmental, different land uses and natural resource issues between these bordering districts.

The most recent consolidation example is the Grant County Conservation District formed in 2012. It was a District Supervisor-led consolidation of the Grant, Warden and Moses Lake Conservation Districts. The Boards of Supervisors of three districts held their respective meetings at the same location on the same night. At the conclusion of their individual meetings, the supervisors met jointly to discuss improved program delivery, staffing and funding issues. The boards worked on comparative business planning including programs and services needed by land managers, workforce needs to deliver the programs and services and the related comparison of combined budgeting to separated districts with increased partnering on certain activities.

A key to the decision for consolidation by the Supervisors of the three districts in Grant County was a commitment by the State Conservation Commission to fund the new consolidated district

at the three-district level for three years. This was done to provide time and resources for the district to secure additional funding and facilitate the transition for three districts in the county to one conservation district. Where conservation districts request assistance, the Commission provides the work session agendas, notes, business plan, supervisor election and appointment plan, budgets, land manager needs summary, programs summary and other support.

The Conservation Commission provides assistance to Conservation Districts considering or engaging in consolidation. The Commission has requested that staff identify and reduce and/or eliminate policy disincentives to consolidations led by the local Supervisors of Conservation District Boards. As an example, the Conservation Commission now splits the \$25,000 allocated for Category 1 funding within a county where more than one Conservation District is operating. The Commission staff has prepared an informational guide for consolidation of Conservation Districts which is made available to Districts that are candidates for consolidation. The informational guide is included as *Appendix B*.

The Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD), a non-profit, non-governmental association organized by conservation districts under statute and representing and advocating for conservation districts, has considered the pros and cons and basis for consolidation by conservation districts. WACD has adopted a member-approved policy that recognizes conservation districts' self-determination in making decisions about their governance (consolidation), and that supports local districts' efforts to consolidate where boards of district supervisors have initiated the process themselves. This WACD policy is included as *Appendix C*.

Despite successes illustrated by examples of increasing administrative efficiencies included in this report, the continuing questions about consolidation of districts are the most controversial among the potentially affected districts. District supervisors who volunteer their time to serve on the boards in multi-district counties often feel "overlooked", or "underappreciated" when their local governance structure is criticized when the issue of consolidation is raised. Nonetheless, districts are still willing to discuss consolidation.

## **Conservation District Efficiencies Activities to Date**

Conservation Districts have continued to increase their administrative efficiencies in various ways throughout their history, but in the last three years Districts have accelerated the adoption of administrative efficiencies actions. The recent Conservation Commission and Conservation District activities have included the following:

- formation of a Task Force on Administrative Efficiencies
- development of a checklist for districts to self-evaluate their potential to increase administrative efficiencies
- a grant program to encourage Conservation Districts to employ actions to increase administrative efficiencies
- maximum Category 1 funding distribution to multi-district counties of \$25,000, as opposed to \$25,000 per district

**Task Force on Administrative Efficiencies:** The 2011-13 State Operating Budget reduced by \$400,000 the State Conservation Commission (SCC) pass-through monies to conservation districts and directed the Commission address his budget reduction through administrative efficiencies. In response, SCC created the Task Force on Administrative Efficiencies. The goal of the Task Force was to identify opportunities and strategies that conservation districts could employ to achieve efficiencies and reduce costs. The Task Force completed this goal. The report of the task force is included as *Appendix D*.

On its own initiative, the Task Force defined administrative expenses, considered mechanisms to measure administrative efficiencies, identified characteristics of conservation districts that are very efficient and those that are inefficient; encouraged the adoption of administrative efficiency practices, and collected examples of administrative efficiency practices. To focus the discussion, administrative expenses were defined as: “Expenses that can be related to the operation of the organization as a whole, that are different from the expenses needed to complete individual conservation projects or activities”.

**Examples of Areas for Potential Administrative Efficiencies** improvement identified by the task force included:

- **Finances & Accounting** including timekeeping; purchasing; bookkeeping; accounting; payroll; invoicing; auditing; budget work; grant reviews; seeking funding; grant writing, management and accounting; district financial management; non-project contracting, procurement; interest on debt; monthly expenditure and income reporting; taxes (property, sales, B&O); other
- **Personnel** including salaries and benefits for administrative staff; supervising; hiring; other personnel duties; human resource needs; personnel supervision and administration; training and professional development; development and implementation of personnel policies and procedures; other
- **Vehicles & Transportation** including vehicles maintenance and repair; replacement costs; fuel; mileage records, some travel; except expenses related to direct program delivery; other
- **Physical Plant** including rent, utilities, phone; facility rent and leasehold improvements; facility maintenance; custodial and grounds maintenance; other
- **District Board** including some travel, lodging, per diem; some training; manager board interactions; elections; basic operations expenses including management of district to comply with laws and regulations (89.08); preparation and carrying out board meetings and elections, other
- **Communications** including mail and general communications; representation at meetings; telecommunications; information technology (IT); conferences and meetings including NGOs and agencies; time working with WSCC, NRCS, and others; other
- **Supplies** including copying and printing; general office supplies; other goods and services; other
- **Equipment** including computers; printers; copy machines; other office equipment; equipment maintenance; depreciation; inventory records and assessments; other

- **Risk Management** including insurances (liability, casualty, other); bonding for board members and staff; legal assistance; legal services; security; licenses and permits; other
- **Operations** including management studies, annual and long-range planning; expenses directly associated with assuring the rules and responsibilities set forth in RCW 89.08; any non-grant reimbursable expense; records management and retention; other

The above recommendations for efficiency are not contingent on any consideration of consolidation in order to be implemented.

### **Administrative Efficiencies Implemented by Conservation Districts**

**Finances / Accounting:** Conservation Districts sharing the cost of a bookkeeper/accounting position through inter-governmental agreements for vouchering, timekeeping, grant management, etc. – examples include: Benton & Franklin CDs; Cowlitz & Wahkiakum CDs; Grant, Warden, and Moses Lake CDs (this sharing helped the districts make the decision to consolidate); Central Klickitat & Eastern Klickitat CDs; Stevens and Pend Oreille CDs; at least three other combinations of districts are having discussions about sharing the expense of the bookkeeper/accountant position.

**Share Employees (administrative and/or technical):** Seven shared engineering positions are currently providing engineering services to multi-district areas; Districts meet regularly to determine highest priority engineering needs and coordinate the work of the engineers. Districts have entered into inter-governmental agreements to share management services. Examples include: Benton & Franklin CDs; Moses Lake, Grant, Warden CDs (this sharing helped the districts make the decision to consolidate); Central Klickitat & Eastern Klickitat; Cowlitz & Wahkiakum CDs; at least two other combinations of districts are having discussions about sharing the expense of the manager position. Whatcom and Skagit CDs are currently sharing a bookkeeper. As an example, an estimated \$62,000 conversion of administrative expenses to conservation services occurred in Benton and Franklin CDs.

Sharing of staff with specialized expertise is common throughout the state with examples including employees with conservation planning expertise, special credentialing in areas such as nutrient management planning, comprehensive nutrient management planning, small acreage conservation planning, forestry, soil science, rangeland, low impact development, stormwater management, air quality, public relations and education program delivery. No less than 60% of the conservation districts have shared staff agreements with neighboring districts.

**District staff restructuring:** The Okanogan CD modified their staffing plan to remove one administrative position in favor of a technical position. This shift allowed the District to increase direct services to landowners and the public without adverse impacts to District management. The administrative workload was picked up by other staff and where possible some work that was not mission critical was stopped.

**Training:** The largest change to increase administrative efficiencies in the past two years has been the increased use of webinars, net-meetings and teleconferences to conduct training and hold meetings. This revision in culture has decreased the cost of travel expenses to attend

meetings, and events, receive critical training and exchange of information; at least one webinar, and no less than six net-meetings and teleconferences are held each month.

The annual Washington Association of District Employees (WADE) annual training event in Leavenworth has provided an effective forum for training district employees and supervisors as well as needed interchange of information in an efficient and effective “one-stop” forum. Over 160 of approximately 500 employees and supervisors typically attend this annual training and interchange of information.

**Procedures / Rules:** A web-based virtual library is being considered to facilitate a greater sharing of all information between districts. It will include templates for common outreach materials, program materials, contract templates, example policy/procedure manual templates, and much more.

### **Administrative Efficiencies Checklist**

Conservation Commission staff developed a checklist for districts to self-evaluate their potential to increase administrative efficiencies and encouraged each district to evaluate potential savings and efficiency opportunities for their own district operations. The checklist is included as *Appendix E*. A fact sheet was developed to accompany the administrative efficiencies checklist and is included as *Appendix F*.

### **Competitive Efficiency Grant Program**

To implement the FY 2011-13 budget requirement, the Commission implemented a competitive grant program for conservation districts. Under this program, conservation districts submitted proposals to implement efficiencies activities. Districts were encouraged to submit proposals that, when implemented and proven, can be replicated in other districts. Two or more districts could partner in a joint proposal. The application form for this competitive grant program is included as *Appendix G*.

Thirty-three applications were received from combinations of 24 conservation districts, totaling \$885,117 in requests. Seven projects were funded with the \$200,000 in grant funding made available. A report of projects, both funded and non-funded is included as *Appendix H*. Highlights of the seven funded projects are noted below with additional information on each project included as *Appendix I*.

**Cascadia** - Provided support to Foster Creek and South Douglas CDs by developing vegetation monitoring protocol and conducting the initial monitoring surveys of the planting sites. Cascadia was instrumental in establishing riparian vegetation monitoring protocols and monitoring on 11 restoration sites in Chelan County. This partnership continues with additional sharing of Cascadia, Foster Creek and South Douglas CD technical staff services in both Chelan and Douglas Counties.

**Jefferson** - entered into a joint Memorandum of Agreement with Whidbey Island Conservation district to share bookkeeping in order to relieve staff workload in Jefferson CD. This led to the efficient and accurate submittal of grant vouchers, grant tracking and accountability, and training

that ultimately resulted in Jefferson County Conservation District's ability to independently fulfill these responsibilities

**Palouse Rock-Lake** - Contracted with grant writer who wrote a successful proposal for the four Conservation Districts in Whitman County to support their respective natural resource educational and informational outreach to Eastern Washington students in Grades 5, and 9 through 12. Grant proposals were also developed for: the Five Star Urban Waters Restoration Program of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and a NRCS Conservation Innovations Grant to support a project relating to Nutrient Management and Assessing Risk Incorporating Oilseed Crops into Cereal Grain Rotations in the Inland Northwest.

**Snohomish** - Snohomish CD partnered with Clallam, King, Pierce, Whatcom and Whidbey Island CDs to help engineering services, as well as partnering with NRCS and neighboring CDs on 22 conservation projects.

**South Douglas** - South Douglas CD was able to form the community's wildfire protection plan (CWPP) with wildfire risk assessments conducted throughout the county. Also through this program, South Douglas CD was able to establish a final draft booklet on targeting noxious weeds in Douglas County.

**Stevens** - Stevens County CD was able to extend administrative opportunities to allow the Pend Oreille and Ferry CDs to upgrade their financial systems to BIAS (a software system that is specifically designed for public entities, such as cities and water, fire, park, and conservation districts). Staff members from Pend Oreille and Ferry CDs were trained in using the BIAS system.

**Whatcom** – Whatcom CD was able to effectively adopt technology into district livestock planning and beyond (tested for riparian and forestry planning; increase communication and collaboration between districts, and create a more efficient and uniform planning process and product). Through the adoption of common planning templates/process etc., the Dairy Nutrient Management Plans have greater consistency. This has made it more efficient for WSDA to conduct inspections. As well the Manure Spreading Advisory (See <http://www.whatcomcd.org/manure-spreading-advisory>) provides forecasts that producers around the sound can utilize to avoid a discharge. Also, moving to a paradigm where guidance/portions of DNMPs that are generic and dynamic are on the web. (See <http://www.whatcomcd.org/dairy-plan-table-of-contents>) These can be update as needed so producers in all cooperating CDs get the most up to date guidance real time when they need it. Delivers a more informed client based while saving planner time.

Adopting the use of iPads and applications for field inventory assessment and planning, it increased efficiency, productivity, and quality of service in the field and office. This technology was shared with other districts state wide, including information and technical assistance on how to properly and effectively use the equipment.

**WACD Forestry Committee** - developed a list of forestry skills available from each district so other districts could obtain 'in-house' expertise and advice. This self-identified list is posted on the WACD website.

## **Conservation Commission Efficiencies Activities to Date**

The Conservation Commission has actively pursued administrative efficiencies activities in the past few years. Efficiencies derived are utilized to further assist conservation districts in improving their capacity to respond to citizen demands for services. A specific example of Commission-derived efficiencies in time and resources are the improvements in processing paperwork, freeing up district technician time, reducing district travel costs, etc. Highlights include:

**Net-meetings and Webinars:** The use of net-meetings for coordinating services, programs and activities of staff has greatly reduced both travel expenses and travel time by Commission staff. Webinars allow the Commission staff to communicate with Conservation District Supervisors and employees at the same time with the same information. The savings in travel expenses and travel time is converted to conservation services and program delivery.

**Conservation Practice Data System (CPDS) Enhancements:** The Commission utilizes a computer data system for the 45 districts to enter project activities, cost share applications, before and after photos of projects, project location, and resource issues addressed by the projects. Enhancements to CPDS include the entry of implementation monitoring information by Commission staff and the ability for districts to enter projects that are in need of funding. The proposed projects information can be pulled and used to produce budget needs reports, and identify what resource needs would be addressed. WSCC and Conservation Districts are collaborating on a way to quickly and effectively prioritize among conservation projects using other states systems as examples.

**Grants & Contracts Efficiencies:** Several administrative efficiencies practices have been implemented by the Conservation Commission including the implementation of a **biennial master grant contract** that contains contract language needed only in one document with details of grants in separate addendums to the master contract; requirement of **electronic funds transfers** between the Commission and Districts to eliminate the printing of warrants, preparing and mailing of checks, and the reduction in time required to transmit payments: requirement of monthly voucher submittal to better manage district expenses, improve district cash flow, increased accountability; all leading to a 2.5 day average grant processing time.

**Mid Biennium Close** – contracts will not be closed out in 2014 allowing for a district to manage its expenditures more effectively, better meeting conservation practice implementation windows, and resulting in an overall reduction by more than 500 documents in the number of annual documents tracked by Commission staff.

**Audit Schedules** – in FY13 all conservation district financial schedules were filed electronically to the State Auditor’s Office (SAO), eliminating over 500 documents that used to be printed and sent by regular mail to the SAO and the Commission. SAO provides Commission staff electronic access to examine Conservation District Schedules and reports.

## **Anticipated Future Savings**

The examples above demonstrate the continued commitment of the 45 Conservation Districts and Conservation Commission to find and implement administrative efficiency practices. Continuing state budget limitations in the area of natural resources have driven implementation of efficiencies by conservation districts and the Commission. The state budget request developed by the Commission and each conservation district for the FY13-15 state budget was funded at 43.7% of the requested and needed budget. In order to protect and conserve Washington’s natural resources, all funding and time efficiencies are being utilized to fund high priority conservation services and programs for Washington State’s land owners and managers for conservation planning, conservation practice application, technical, financial and educational conservation needs.

As conservation districts seek to secure needed state funding for conservation work, they will continue to pursue additional efficiencies in conservation services and programs. Any savings (past and future) allow conservation districts to incrementally increase their capacity to meet citizen demands for services. That savings in time allow more time for field technicians to assist landowners and managers implement conservation. That reduced administrative costs and quicker contract and payment processing allows districts to more effectively and more timely assist customers. There is not going to be an amount of cash available at the end of the day due to efficiencies for someone to take away from the conservation work needing to be completed. We are investing any of the savings back into services, so we can better meet our under-funded role in providing conservation services to landowners and citizens.

One of our local district supervisors, by self-initiative walked through the budget notes for the Biennium 11-13 budget, to identify other agencies with a similar efficiencies charge as was given to the Conservation Commission. Five agencies were identified and contacted to determine their approach to responding to the legislative directive. At least, at that time, none of those agencies were undertaking the scope of the response that was taken by the Conservation Commission. We would respectfully propose, to our knowledge that no agency can match the effort of the Conservation Commission, Conservation Districts, and WACD to identify and implement administrative efficiency measures. Hopefully, that effort, which continues, would be appropriately recognized by the legislature.

The service improvements derived from these continuing efforts will provide benefits to our landowners and managers in the future, even as state funding for natural resource conservation services and programs increases.

# Appendix A. Summary of Consolidations of Conservation Districts to Date

Washington State Conservation District Creation Date and History of Consolidations		DENOTES CURRENT CONSERVATION DISTRICT	
Creation Date	District Name		
July 7, 1944	Davenport Reardan		
July 28, 1944	South West Spokane		
July 26, 1949	North Spokane	11/26/1973	Spokane County
July 26, 1949	Central Spokane		
May 2, 1940	Latah Rock Creek		
April 28, 1941	Douglas		
July 22, 1941	Moses Coulee	10/7/1969	Douglas
July 12, 1947	East Wenatchee	10/7/1969	East Wenatchee
		8/5/1975	South Douglas
September 9, 1947	San Juan Island		
September 9, 1947	Orcas Island	4/3/1977	San Juan County
June 16, 1949	Lopez Island		
June 7, 1940	Loomis		
July 1, 1948	North East Okanogan	7/1/1963	North Okanogan
July 30, 1949	South Central Okanogan	2/1/1971	South Okanogan
January 14, 1946	Methow Valley		
July 1, 1948	South East Okanogan	7/1/1948	South East Okanogan
		4/12/1977	Okanogan
May 28, 1942	Ahtanum Valley		
October 1, 1945	Hi-Land	1/17/1983	North Yakima
August 16, 1941	Wenas Valley		
August 11, 1952	Odessa		
January 11, 1952	Northwest Lincoln		
September 27, 1948	Sprague Harrington	3/28/1975	Lincoln County
July 7, 1944	Davenport Reardan		
July 10, 1950	Hartline Highland		
June 26, 1950	Wilson Creek	11/13/1974	North Grant
December 24, 1951	Ephrata	10/7/1969	Ephrata
July 22, 1941	Moses Coulee	6/10/1981	Upper Grant
December 24, 1951	Quincy	10/7/1969	Quincy
January 26, 1951	Othello	1/26/1951	Othello
May 7, 1954	Warden	1/26/1951	Othello
April 30, 1945	Moses Lake		
		12/1/1986	Upper Grant
		12/1/2004	Grant
		05/07/54	Warden
		4/30/1945	Moses Lake
		9/20/2012	Grant County

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**Washington State Conservation District Creation Date and History of Consolidations**

Creation Date	District Name	DENOTES CURRENT CONSERVATION DISTRICT
July 24, 1944	Roza	
June 9, 1947	Lower Yakima Valley	12/20/1961 Lower Yakima Valley
March 10, 1950	Wapato	5/5/1967 Toppenish      9/24/1974 South Yakima
June 9, 1947	West Benton	
May 28, 1942	North Benton	3/24/1967 West Benton
May 28, 1942	East Benton	5/28/1942 East Benton      2/1/1974 Benton
September 13, 1945	Central Whitman	
October 7, 1946	West Whitman	12/8/1966 Whitman
April 22, 1941	Walla Walla	
February 13, 1947	South Walla Walla	12/18/1961 Walla Walla County
June 9, 1947	Cle Elum	
May 26, 1942	Kittitas	6/5/1962 Kittitas
May 28, 1948	Curlew	
May 20, 1947	South Ferry	12/30/1964 Ferry
March 24, 1948	Wenatchee Entiat	
March 30, 1948	Lake Chelan	9/27/1973 Cascadia
November 23, 1951	Ritzville	
November 25, 1952	Benge Washtucna	4/11/1963 Adams
April 25, 1940	North Palouse	
November 13, 1944	South Palouse	4/10/1974 Palouse
June 15, 1940	Asotin	
June 21, 1940	Grays Harbor	
June 28, 1940	Wahkiakum	
July 1, 1940	Underwood	
September 24, 1940	Eastern Klickitat	
August 7, 1941	Pine Creek	

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**Washington State Conservation District Creation Date and History of Consolidations**

Creation Date	District Name	DENOTES CURRENT CONSERVATION DISTRICT
August 28, 1941	Snohomish	
March 6, 1942	Stevens	
September 11, 1942	Palouse Rock Lake	
September 14, 1942	Foster Creek	
September 16, 1942	Skagit	
January 4, 1943	Lewis	
January 22, 1943	Clark	
December 27, 1943	Cowlitz	
April 16, 1946	Central Klickitat	
April 27, 1946	Jefferson	
June 4, 1946	Whatcom	
May 25, 1948	Pacific	
May 25, 1948	Thurston County	
March 15, 1949	Pend Oreille	
June 29, 1949	Columbia	
July 14, 1949	Pierce County	
July 20, 1949	King County	
March 10, 1950	Kitsap	
March 22, 1951	Pomeroy	
October 2, 1951	Franklin	
June 7, 1956	Mason County	
October 2, 1959	Clallam	
June 21, 1967	Whidbey Island	

At one time, Washington State had 97 conservation districts reflecting the diverse nature of the landscape and the primary resources in the area. Since then, through a variety of consolidations, the state now has 47 conservation districts in which a majority reflect county boundaries.

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## **Appendix B. Informational Guide for Consolidation of Conservation Districts**

### **Conservation District Consolidation Updated June 2012**

#### **Authority to Consolidate**

RCW 89.08.180 contains three paragraphs pertaining to the combination or consolidation of two or more conservation districts, and gives the Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission) certain powers and duties:

- *“Upon petition of the boards of supervisors of two or more districts, the commission may approve the combining of all or parts of such districts and name the district, or districts, with the approval of the name by the secretary of state. A public hearing and/or a referendum may be held if deemed necessary or desirable by the commission in order to determine the wishes of the voters.”*
- *“When districts are combined, the joint boards of supervisors will first select a chairman, secretary and other necessary officers and select a regular date for meetings. All elected supervisors will continue to serve as members of the board until the expiration of their current term of office, and/or until the election date nearest their expiration date. All appointed supervisors will continue to serve until the expiration of their current term of office, at which time the commission will make the necessary appointments. In the event that more than two districts are combined, a similar procedure will be set up and administered by the commission.”*
- *“When districts are combined or territory is moved from one district to another, the property, records and accounts of the districts involved shall be distributed to the remaining district or districts as approved by the commission. A new certificate of organization, naming and describing the new district or districts, shall be issued by the secretary of state.”*

#### **Required steps**

The Commission will require the following information and actions before taking action to approve or deny a petition to combine or consolidate two or more conservation districts:

1. A petition must be provided to the Commission by the combining districts. RCW 89.08.180. The petition shall include:
  - a. A schedule for reducing the number of board members serving the consolidated conservation district to the required composition of three elected and two appointed conservation district supervisors. RCW 89.08.180.
    - i. The schedule must provide that the number of elected supervisors is always equal to, or greater than, the number of appointed supervisors; appointed supervisors may not outnumber elected supervisors.
    - ii. Each supervisor will serve his or her full three-year term as specified in statute. Supervisors may voluntarily resign at any time. A vacancy created by such a resignation may or may not be filled depending on the schedule submitted in the petition.
  - b. A description of the property, records, and accounts of each conservation district requesting to be combined. The description must be approved by each petitioning conservation district board of supervisors, and must be acceptable to the Commission for the consolidation petition to be approved. RCW 89.08.180. The petition must include:
    - i. Identification of all assets that will be transferred to the consolidated conservation district.

- ii. Identification of which conservation district office will be the official office of the consolidated conservation district, and identify any planned reduction in the location and number of offices available to the public during the consolidation period. All official records of the consolidated district must be maintained at the official district office location.
    - iii. Identification of the location of all assets of the consolidated district, particularly if any asset is to be located at a place other than the official office.
    - iv. A description of the liabilities of each of the combining districts and the disposition of those liabilities following consolidation.
  - c. A plan to combine the authorized conservation programs of the petitioning conservation districts must accompany the petition, and must be approved by each petitioning conservation district board of supervisors.
  - d. A listing of all memoranda of agreement or understanding that each district has with other entities (governmental or private) and a description of whether those memoranda need to be reviewed or modified to take into account the consolidation of the districts.
  - e. A name for the proposed consolidated conservation district must accompany the petition, must be approved by each petitioning conservation district board of supervisors, and must be acceptable to the Washington State Conservation Commission for the consolidation petition to be approved. RCW 89.08.180.
- 2. After receipt of the petition, the Commission will:
  - a. Hold a public hearing before the Commission will act on a request to combine conservation districts.
  - b. Consider all comments received by the public.
  - c. Consider all required information provided by the petitioning conservation districts.
  - d. Determine whether consolidation will promote the practice and feasible administration of the proposed consolidated conservation district.
  - e. Determine whether consolidation will best provide for addressing resource needs contained in each conservation district's authorized conservation program.
- 3. Finding in the affirmative for all required elements, the Commission may approve such a combination or consolidation of two or more conservation districts. If the Commission denies the petition, a specific statement of the reasons for the denial will be submitted to each of the boards of supervisors of the requesting districts. Any denial of a petition by the Commission may include information on how the districts may resubmit a petition for further consideration. If the petition is approved, the Conservation Commission will request the Washington State Secretary of State issue a new certificate of organization, naming and describing the new consolidated conservation district.
- 4. After approval of the petition to consolidate:
  - a. The joint boards of supervisors will first select a chairman, secretary and other necessary officers from the consolidated group of supervisors. RCW 89.08.180.
  - b. The consolidated board will select a regular date for meetings. RCW 89.08.180.
  - c. All elected supervisors will continue to serve as members of the board consistent with the schedule submitted as part of the petition for consolidation.

The Commission shall assist all affected conservation districts as needed to effect an orderly and effective transition during the consolidation period.

## Appendix C. WACD Policy on Conservation District Consolidation



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

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### WACD POLICY # 2013-001 CONSERVATION DISTRICTS' CONSOLIDATION – PRO AND CON

A frequent question raised by legislators and other decision-makers is *why there are 45 conservation districts when we have only 39 counties in Washington State*. Granted, this question assumes an often misinterpreted relationship between counties and conservation districts in terms of organization, purpose, funding and governance. And it is often asked without an understanding of how and why conservation districts were established, and how they are maintained, as state-subdivision special purpose districts under state law. Nevertheless, **conservation district consolidation** has been a periodic occurrence in Washington's history since districts were established. Case in point: in 2012, three conservation districts merged into a single, county-sized district (Grant County CD), reducing our number from 47 to 45. Looking at the conservation district map, we see ten conservation districts not meeting what may be considered to be a general consistency with their respective counties' size and boundaries.

Together with the supervisor elections issue, district consolidation is a topic that sometimes arises in state budget discussions with legislators. **As of May, 2013, both House and Senate 2013-15 budget proposals include proviso language that requires the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) to consider district consolidation options related to district overhead costs and efficiencies.** Therefore, it is important that WACD adopt a policy on conservation district consolidation, if we are to be prepared to educate legislators, to deal with legislative inquiry and opportunities, or to respond quickly in the case of formal legislative action.

(Here, it is important to note, for some readers, that the number of governing supervisors on a conservation district board is five [5]. Three of these five supervisors are publicly elected by local citizenry; two are appointed by the WSCC based upon applications submitted through the conservation district. When two or more conservation districts consolidate, the number of district board supervisors is reduced over a period of time to five from some multiple of five, depending on how many districts consolidate. The larger area comprising a consolidated district is then governed by fewer local supervisors altogether.)

In 2012, the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) adopted a revised commission policy on district consolidation. This new WSCC policy established improved procedures and assistance for districts initiating a consolidation process. It is important to note that the revised WSCC policy does not include an advocacy position on consolidation. That is, it does not take a position on whether districts *should*

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consolidate, leaving the initiative to the individual districts. WACD commented in support of this policy. WACD believes that **local district initiative** should be the basis for any consolidation effort, rather than forces from outside a district, be it the WSCC or other source. WACD bases this belief on our long-standing support of the **locally-led principle**, and the need to maintain strong local leadership and governance of conservation districts.

The basis for a WACD policy, first then, is that consolidation, should it occur, must come at the initiative of involved conservation districts – **internally**, in response to a shared need for joining together. It follows then that WACD would not support an external influence seeking to **force** conservation districts to consolidate, **against their will**, regardless of the external rationale (e.g., simply accommodating allocation or other logistics; making an assumption about perceived efficiencies).

A WACD policy on district consolidation is not enough to satisfy questions arising about the issue. WACD also should identify the factors that would (or *should*) cause two or more conservation districts to determine whether they may wish to consolidate – pro and con.

#### **Considering Consolidation - Pro and Con**

This WACD policy is based on the assumption that a conservation district's decision to consolidate with another district is really a self-determination of **proper governance**. Conservation districts are founded on the **locally-led principle** – a principle based on recognition that a conservation district board of supervisors governs the conservation district to provide the local leadership, accountability, and trust needed to effectively respond to natural resource concerns of citizens in their local area. At what point does governance improve through consolidation? At what point does a **consolidated** conservation district become so large or contain so varied, divergent and competing interests that its five-member board of supervisors loses its **critical locally-led nature**? A decision on merging, while it often involves consideration of administrative and technical costs, also comes down to what the board(s) believe is the proper governance for the local area. *Who sets policy? Who makes decisions?*

Districts already share many resources to a large extent, either on a short-term or permanent basis. This level of cooperation has resulted from personnel shortages and the need to accommodate reductions in funding for basic infrastructure – and from **a failure to expand resources to meet an expanding demand for services**. This, together with the **need to become more efficient** in services delivery has driven greater collaboration among districts. Most prominently, districts share engineering services (cluster engineers), conservation planners, financial personnel, or even a district manager. Districts have entered into inter-local agreements to share resources and objectives. Districts have shared partner agency (NRCS) technical staff resources for many years, as federal agencies have reduced staff levels. It is expected that the

drive to become even more efficient and reduce overhead costs will continue to improve resource sharing and collaboration across district boundaries.

At what point, then, should a conservation district decide that its board of supervisors is in need of, or suitable for, merging with a neighboring board of supervisors to form a new, consolidated district? What in the governance process indicates that this should – or *should not* – occur?

WACD recommends that conservation districts consider, from a governance standpoint, the following factors - both pro and con - for consolidation, looking at the benefits and possible risks associated with district consolidation. Note that some of these factors may be included in the Good Governance process, whereby districts' performance is evaluated and corrective action and education are also indicated.

Pro:

1. A district may share staff resources and objectives to the degree that a **single point of staff supervision or policy-setting** is required to maximize services delivery, reduce duplication of administrative workload, and to avoid conflicts in scheduling, compensation or employee actions.
2. A board of supervisors may suffer from **poor governance** (poor performance) to the degree that is not corrected with training, and merger with a neighboring well-functioning board is indicated, as a last resort, to resolve these problems.
3. A board may not generate local candidates for **supervisor elections** sufficient to sustain a full – **and active** - board of supervisors.
4. District board **expenses** may warrant savings achieved through consolidation (in conjunction with other benefits).
5. Two or more conservation districts (contained within a single county) may find **more receptive county leadership** to adopting an assessment or rates and charges for a consolidated, county-area conservation district.
6. Two or more conservation districts may determine that their local resource concerns (and/or state or federal resource concerns) consistently **overlap**, making consolidation result in a more efficient and effective resource targeting of available funding and planning resources.

Con:

1. A consolidated district's larger size and land area may lead to a **loss of true local representation, leadership and accountability**. A too-large consolidated district (e.g., regional scale district) may lose the ability to **govern effectively** (representatively) with a five-member board.
2. One district's leadership (board) may be **overwhelmed** (subsumed) by another via consolidation, leading to a loss of local leadership and fairness in addressing a combined area's resource concerns.
3. Neighboring conservation districts may share resources while having substantially **different local policy approaches** to conservation services, based on resolutions or policies adopted by the board of supervisors.

4. Adjacent conservation districts may be sufficiently different in terms of resource needs, customer type, agricultural practices, etc., so as to **lose fairness and equity** in their response capacity with consolidation (limited resources prioritized to one area's issue at the expense of another).
5. **Insufficient funding** (already a problem for districts) may be allocated to a larger, consolidated conservation district area, depending on funding allocation formulae developed by the WSCC.
6. Existing critical **local district partnerships** may be jeopardized if local ties (via board of supervisors) are lost or weakened through consolidation.
7. Pressure may increase to involve county officials in conservation district leadership selection (e.g., **district supervisor appointment by county officials versus public elections or WSCC appointment**) as districts consolidate into county-size districts, resulting in a loss of accountability to a **direct electorate or state authority**.
8. Legislative pressure may increase to **replace needed state appropriations** with limited county-assessed funds as districts consolidate into county-size districts, resulting in loss of critical state infrastructure funding for conservation districts.
9. Legislative (or county) pressure may increase with district consolidation to county-size to **incorporate conservation districts (now special purpose districts) into their respective general purpose, local government units**, resulting in a loss of state-level partnership and program and administrative support, and likely local shifting of funds away from conservation work to general purpose government priority functions (e.g., police, fire, criminal justice, as testified to by local government officials during 2012 hearings on junior taxing/special purpose districts).
10. In terms of natural resources, agriculture, urbanization and other conservation issues, there is nothing special about **county or other political boundaries**. These boundaries are not set using criteria related to naturally-occurring resource similarities. Political boundaries are often set using natural resource features as **separating** boundaries rather than as **uniting** natural features. Such organization of conservation districts (as an end-product of consolidation) could be inefficient and ineffective in some cases compared to existing boundaries for conservation districts.

In summary, WACD adopts as policy that, **when conservation districts identify their own need to consolidate, and when it works locally to better meet the conservation needs of the community, improve efficiencies and conservation services delivery, and sustain the locally-led principle, WACD supports the process**. WACD should collaborate with the WSCC to advise and inform conservation districts about the factors that should be evaluated when considering an option to consolidate with a neighboring district, compared to other collaborative approaches.

It follows that WACD would not support legislative conditioning of overall appropriated funds, or development of WSCC funding allocation policies, that are intended to (or that inadvertently) provide a **dis-incentive** to maintaining current

(separate) governance for districts sharing similar resource concerns or geographic/political boundaries. WACD should share information with legislators and others to educate decision-makers about collaborative efforts between conservation districts, and about how these may be more effective than consolidation as an option for improving the efficiencies and effectiveness of conservation districts. WACD should emphasize that consolidation is not necessarily the appropriate mandate to attempt to improve a good system. Increased use of collaborative partnerships, inter-local agreements, and sharing of information among districts is a better way to achieve desired results to improve the statewide conservation delivery system.

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**WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

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**Resolution No. 2013-17**

**Title:** Consolidation and Budget Issue Separation

**Problem:**

District Governance and structure are currently linked with the budget in the minds of some decision makers. This manifests itself mainly in the discussion surrounding consolidation of districts. This tends to misrepresent the founding principles of locally led conservation and a district's own governance and sovereignty. While district efficiency efforts are linked to the budget, governance should be a separate issue. This is a current issue related to a 2013 budget proviso, but should be a standing position of WACD and WSCC.

**Recommendation:**

WACD and WSCC will communicate to the Legislature and other decision makers:

- The locally-led basis for the foundational governance structure of districts, and
- That while district efficiency efforts are linked to the budget, governance should be a separate issue.

WACD and WSCC should align their existing policies on district consolidation, and should incorporate those aligned existing policies into this communication.

**Presented by:** WACD Legislative Committee, September 12, 2013.

Assigned To: Legislative Committee

**RESOLUTION PASSED**

## **Appendix D. Conservation District Administrative Efficiencies Report to WSCC Members**

Developed by the WSCC Task Force on Administrative Efficiencies  
November 8, 2011

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### Administrative Expenses Defined:

The Commission Task Force on Conservation District Administrative Efficiencies offers the following definition and example groupings of administrative expenses related to conservation district operations:

#### Definition:

“Expenses that can be related to the operation of the organization as a whole, that are different from the expenses needed to complete individual conservation projects or activities”

### Example Groupings of Administrative Expenses:

Accounting & Finances: Examples include: timekeeping; purchasing; bookkeeping; accounting; payroll; vouchering; auditing; budget work; grant reviews; seeking funding; grant writing, management & accounting; district financial management; non-project contracting, procurement; interest on debt; monthly expenditure and income reporting; taxes (property, sales, B&O); other

Operations: Examples include: management studies, annual and long-range planning; expenses directly associated with assuring the rules and responsibilities set forth in RCW 89.08; any non-grant reimbursable expense; records management & retention; other

District Board: Examples include: some travel, lodging, per diem; some training; manager working with board; elections; basic “keep the doors open” expenses; subscriptions; memberships; professional services; overall management of district to comply with laws and regulations (89.08); preparation and carrying out board meeting and elections, other

Physical Plant: Examples include: rent, utilities, phone; facility rent & leasehold improvements; facility maintenance; custodial & grounds maintenance; other

Communications: Examples include: answering the mail & general communications; representation at meetings; telecommunications; information technology (IT); conferences & meetings including NGOs and agencies; time working with WSCC, NRCS, and others; other

Personnel: Examples include: some salaries and benefits (administrative); supervising; hiring; other personnel duties; human resource needs; personnel supervision & administration; training & professional development; development & implementation of personnel policies and procedures; other

Supplies: Examples include: copying & printing; general office supplies; other goods & services; other

Equipment: Examples include: computers; printers; copy machines; other office equipment; equipment maintenance; depreciation; inventory records and assessments; other

Vehicles & Transportation (administrative & operations): Examples include: vehicles maintenance & repair; replacement costs; fuel; mileage records, some travel; except expenses related to direct program delivery; other

Risk Management: Examples include: insurances (liability, casualty, other); bonding for board members and staff; legal assistance; legal services; security; licenses & permits; other

### How Should We Measure Administrative Efficiencies?

The task force discussed several ideas for how to measure district administrative efficiencies including; various ratios for comparison of expenses, comparative analysis, and reduction in repetitive functions, being able to meet deadlines and relation of administrative efficiencies to effectiveness in delivering conservation services.

One member offered “If the goal is the “measure” the results, then it must be something that is quantifiable. It is very difficult to “measure” something consistently and without bias on a qualitative basis. However, some qualitative measure may also be important to evaluate. That is, the presence or absence of characteristics of an efficient district (see below) could be important factors to evaluate. Need benchmarks that tie to legislative expectations and audit performance. Also, the easiest and fastest way is not always the efficient way, and it may not generate the best and most effective outcomes.”

Notes:

- Must have quantitative and subjective elements to measurement.
- There are several metrics that might be used to determine the administrative efficiency of a district.
- Measurement should be used as a tool for districts to evaluate their own operations.
- We need not create additional administrative burden for conservation districts in order to improve or account for administrative efficiencies – our purpose is to do conservation work and not to spend undue time accounting for the administrative efficiencies.
- Sometimes administrative expenses relate to several funding sources or projects.

### Opportunities for Conservation Districts to Improve Administrative Efficiencies

Bookkeeping / Accounting:

- Have financial clusters, such as 1 bookkeeper for multiple districts or districts share bookkeepers for centralized/regionalized vouchering, timekeeping, grant management, etc.
- Evaluate the potential of all districts moving towards consistent, consolidated accounting software purchased statewide (longer term opportunity).
- Supervisors are encouraged to conduct a workload analysis including time and budget impacts.

#### Share Employees (administrative and/or technical):

- Coordinate more closely on natural resource issues in a geographic area and base funding on natural resource goal rather than by program - this allows technicians and other staff to address the issue and not be limited by “program” allocation.
- Share Management services in smaller adjoining districts.
- Sharing of staff with specialized expertise; sharing of expertise, resources, and tools; collaboration with partners and other districts; further the mission and goals of the technical employees; development group; flexible work hours and place; share resources with non-district entities.
- Provide examples of districts sharing administrative expertise and capability among themselves to reduce duplication and lower expenses.

#### Training:

- Teach Board’s and lead staff to develop processes of budget review that promote a true fiscally responsible government entity.
- Attend training where options/ideas are presented and shared; use/promote area meetings or clusters of districts to explore best practices and efficient ways to use available/limited resources; consistency in best practices between state funding agencies.
- Increase use of webinars, teleconferences, and videoconferences to conduct meetings.
- Attend WADE training where options and ideas are presented.

#### Opportunities for Conservation Districts to Improve Administrative Efficiencies

##### Procedures / Rules:

- Rewrite the RCW to allow larger districts to have regions, and add one additional supervisor per region. Or have them elected by region. There are groups out there using a regional approach to representation. This would address the landscape, natural resource issues described as the basis for multiple districts per county. Even existing large districts with only one district per county could adopt a regional approach with their district. This would get to 39 districts, but with a local contact for those folks who feel they get lost in the size or the issues in the area.
- Continue to automate; standardize planning; progress tracking processes; efficiency of reporting and other financial requirements.
- Explore the use of one data system for reporting BMPs through WSCC that would share data to other agencies. (Long term opportunity).
- A **virtual library** under WACD needs to be created to facilitate a greater sharing of all information between districts, containing everything from templates for common outreach materials, program materials, contract templates, example policy/procedure manual templates, and much more. Standardization of software would be created so that each district can adapt and localize these templates. This might be done through purchasing site licenses for all districts in the state.

#### Funding:

- Reduce administration & overhead costs where feasible.

- There needs to be a special assessment council made up of those who have been involved in laying the ground work for an assessment that could be available to coach those districts who would like to pursue that as a funding source.
- Increase operating margin through increase in revenue or reduction in administrative costs.
- Apply for grants.
- Reduce the need for competitive “soft money” funds (perhaps by having the WSCC leverage on our behalf – example garner SRFB funds to complement those CD’s who’s Cat.1 or Cat.2 funds are being used on Salmon Recovery Projects).
- Employ a mechanism of “bulk grant writing” (WACD, RC&D, other non-profits, etc…) to develop funding pots to address Cat. 1, 2 and 3 needs.
- Evaluate the grant submittal and evaluation process to increase efficiencies; encourage partnerships and creative solutions that drive toward efficient use of limited resources.
- Forming clusters of districts with similar resource concerns - formally uniting them to solicit and administer grants such as is being done with the Puget Sound Districts. An opportunity to make this effective and efficient – perhaps districts pooling funding to get grants written, having WSCC or the most efficient administrator of grants.

#### Consolidate:

- Multiple districts in areas (perhaps in same counties or adjacent districts) doing similar functions, programs, and projects - likely should merge – streamlining board and administrative functions.
- Districts where local landowners are not vested in serving on local district boards should combine if this lack of interest in having a viable, dynamic district has historically been a problem.
- To help with consolidation have a phase in period with full allocation for each of the CDs this year, Second year -  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the total allocation for all districts granted to a joint board, and third year  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the total allocation for all districts.
- Commission will reevaluate what the state budget language requests are in the area of consolidation and remove disincentives to consolidation of districts in multi-district - county areas.

#### Examples of Conservation Districts Improving Administrative Efficiencies in the Current Biennium

##### Bookkeeping / Accounting:

- Conservation Districts are sharing the cost of a bookkeeper/accounting position through inter-governmental agreements for vouchering, timekeeping, grant management, etc. – examples include: Benton & Franklin CDs; Cowlitz & Wahkiakum CDs; Grant, Warden, and Moses Lake CDs; Central Klickitat & Eastern Klickitat CDs; Stevens and Pend Oreille CDs; at least 3 other combinations of districts are having discussions about sharing the expense of the bookkeeper/accountant position.
- Supervisors have been encouraged to conduct a workload analysis including time and budget impacts.

#### Share Employees (administrative and/or technical):

- Seven shared engineering positions are currently providing engineering services to multi-district areas; districts meet regularly to determine highest priority engineering needs and coordinate the work of the engineers.
- Districts have entered into inter-governmental agreements to share management services. Examples include: Benton & Franklin CDs; Moses Lake, Grant, Warden CDs; Central Klickitat & Eastern Klickitat; Cowlitz & Wahkiakum CDs; at least 2 other combinations of districts are having discussions about sharing the expense of the manager position.
- Sharing of staff with specialized expertise is common throughout the state with examples including employees with conservation planning expertise, special credentialing in areas such as nutrient management planning, comprehensive nutrient management planning, small acreage conservation planning, forestry, soil science, rangeland, urban, stormwater, public relations and education. No less than 30% of the conservation districts have shared staff agreements with neighboring districts

#### Training:

- The largest change in the past two years has been the increase use of webinars, net-meetings and teleconferences conduct training and hold meetings to increase administrative efficiencies. This revision in culture has decreased the cost of travel expenses to attend meetings, events, and receive critical training and information exchange; at least one webinar, and no less than 6 net-meetings and teleconferences are held each month.
- The annual Washington Association of District Employees annual training event in Leavenworth has provided an effective forum for training district employees and supervisors as well as needed interchange of information in an efficient and effective “one-stop” forum. Over 160 employees and supervisors of approximately 500 attend this event.

#### Procedures / Rules:

- A **virtual library** is being considered to facilitate a greater sharing of all information between districts, containing everything from templates for common outreach materials, program materials, contract templates, example policy/procedure manual templates, and much more.

#### Funding:

- A special assessment council is being considered that would be made up of those district supervisors and employees who have been involved in laying the ground work for an assessment that could be available to coach those districts who would like to pursue that as a funding source.
- Conservation districts have a history of working together on like and similar resource concerns by formally and informally uniting to solicit and administer grants such as is being done with the Puget Sound Districts.

#### Consolidate:

- Districts in 4 of the 5 multi-district counties are engaging in discussions of sharing employees and reducing administrative overhead. WSCC staffs are providing facilitation

assistance in these on-going multi-district board discussions of the conservation program delivery, representation, benefits, drawbacks, and procedures for consolidating districts on county boundaries.

- Commission will reevaluate what the state budget language requests are in the area of consolidation and consider removing disincentives to consolidation of districts in multi-district county areas.
- Note: of all the above examples of increasing administrative efficiencies, consolidation of districts is the most controversial among the effected districts...district supervisors who have volunteered their time to serve on these boards often feel “defeated”, “underappreciated” and some even get “angry” that someone is suggesting their district program is not worthy to be funded or remain; this coupled with a “heritage” culture exists where fathers and grandfathers began and/or served on the conservation district over the years; along with the reduced representation on the local board; along with the combining of assets (and liabilities) make for a volatile environment. Despite this volatility, districts are still discussing this option. Further reductions in state funding of conservation districts will not lead to a direct effect in consolidating districts and could even set back the discussions being held.

#### Characteristics of Conservation Districts that are Efficient or Inefficient

The task force produced the following example characteristics of conservation districts that are efficient and inefficient.

##### Staffing:

The task force identified staffing characteristics and examples of **efficient** districts.

- District with adequate staff to meet the workload needs; e.g., Managers can do managerial tasks, bookkeepers can handle financials and often have collateral duties such as education and outreach, and field staff can work more directly with landowners.
- Staff is involved in their community and knows their district; they know their district board and understand them.
- Low number of administrative personnel as a ratio of technical staff.
- High number of experienced workers and /or a high number of years of service per employee; ability to multi-task and work different programs or the ability to specialize and share that expertise with other districts.
- Shared employees with other districts.

The task force identified staffing characteristics and examples of **inefficient** districts

- Administrative efficiencies **is not**; two districts, same manager, same bookkeeper, same technician for both districts but submitting ‘identical’ annual plans, report of accomplishments, addendums, deliverables, etc. If they are identical – then they should be 1 district, not multiple districts/multiple boards.
- Districts would be better served if Regional Managers were replaced with various specialists available to the districts as resources. (i.e. HR Specialist, Accounting/Finance Specialist, Grant Writing Specialist, etc.).
- Volunteers may not cost much to use, but at times may not be an efficient use of some staff resources (it comes down to management, projects types, task requirements, etc.).

### Administrative Expenses:

The task force identified administrative expense characteristics and examples of **efficient** districts

- Low ratio of administrative expenses to total revenue.
- Low administrative costs as a percentage of overall district costs.
- Co-management, partnership and co-location with NRCS (2 free spots, access to vehicles, etc...), belonging to Enduris, eligible for surplus (desks/chairs etc...from USDA partners etc...), technology (webinars, e-mail etc...), past consolidations, staff sharing, cluster engineer (and the concept).
- Ability to form partnerships and use MOAs and Inter-Local Agreements (LTAs) to secure and share resources.
- Overhead costs of districts are typically lower than comparable costs at government agencies.

The task force identified administrative expense characteristics and examples of **inefficient** districts

- Districts with a low number of grants/contracts as compared to staff costs or staff FTEs should be evaluated.
- Each district has its own purchasing, timekeeping and other similar/redundant admin functions
- Maybe the redundant administrative tasks performed by each district.
- Autonomy in many of the administrative functions that need to be accomplished has the potential to create inefficiencies. Every district creates all of their policies, their legal contracts, their own materials and templates for everything from reporting to outreach. We have a tremendous streamlining opportunity here.
- Multiple adjacent small districts in similar ecological areas.
- Planning may be necessary, but it may also be inefficient.
- The amount of time required to work with some NRCS staff and programs.
- District Supervisor elections in some districts are too expensive and arduous for the results. Efficiency would dictate revisions in the Supervisors selection processes be considered. (long term opportunity)

### Characteristics of Conservation Districts that are Efficient or Inefficient

#### Accountability:

The task force identified accountability characteristics and examples of **efficient** districts

- Look to the WSCC 'good standing checklist' for potential guidance.
- Use databases, accounting software and other efficient methods to track and report progress.
- High use of technology and systems for accounting, data management, communications and reporting.
- Utilize templates/boiler plate/checklists to develop effective plans accurately and quickly.
- Districts try to ensure that the bean counting effort doesn't take more than the bean is worth.

### Finances & Accounting:

The task force identified finances and accounting characteristics and examples of **efficient** districts

- Vouch and complete Commission identified tasks accurately and in a timely manner.
- High ratio of non-commission revenues relative to total revenues.
- High ratio of non-Commission funds relative to total available funds.
- Voucher and complete Commission and other entity tasks accurately and in a timely manner.

The task force identified finances and accounting characteristics and examples of **inefficient** districts

- Financial reports are different from district to district that they cannot consult with each other, one bookkeeper cannot take over for another bookkeeper in case of illness or job changes, a new bookkeeper will have difficulty seeking advice from another with a different system.

### Characteristics of Conservation Districts that are Effective

The task force produced the following example characteristics of conservation districts that are **effective**.

Effective Districts:

- Ability to work with land owners as a non-regulatory agency.
- Local oversight of programs and activities and the ability to structure programs to local needs.
- Ability to provide a wide range of programs and assistance to district members.
- High program specific metrics; e.g., the number of CREP plans.
- Practices procured, installed, maintained.
- Need to be flexible and willing to evaluate programs objectively and be willing to make tough choices and changes.
- Willingness and ability to share expertise, employees, and other tools with other districts; use of volunteers.
- Implement policies that are consistent with other districts.
- High program specific measures (e.g., number of plans generated or updated, number of site visits, number of website hits, number of practices installed, etc.).
- Even though districts have local, state and federal laws to comply with – our ability to work with a local board as our decision making body creates a very nimble and quick way to make decisions in a timely way. Also, district employees are not tied to labor negotiations (outside of state and federal laws) that allow us to be more cost effective in how we work. Districts create effectiveness because of our ability to coordinate private landowners, county departments, and other local partners resulting in streamlined and collaborative local process to get projects done.
- Much of the management and time is from volunteers. Some believe that administrative expenses could be reduced by combining districts; however, combination could result in loss of much of the volunteer leadership and expertise provided by supervisors who would be lost from combinations. The issue is much more complex than just making all counties have just one district.

# Appendix E. Conservation District Administrative Efficiencies Checklist

Working Draft: 12.11.2013

This checklist provides ideas for consideration in enhancing your districts efficiency. It was built from work done by the WSCC District Efficiencies Work Group

Conservation District:

Completed on:

Completed by:

Reviewed by:

### Administrative Expenses Defined:

The Commission Task Force on Conservation District Administrative Efficiencies offers the following definition and example groupings of administrative expenses related to conservation district operations:

#### Definition:

“Expenses that can be related to the operation of the organization as a whole, that are different from the expenses needed to complete individual conservation projects or activities”

Already Implementing			
Could Improve (see action plan)			
Not Interested or Not Applicable			
<b>Accounting &amp; Finances:</b>			
			Currently sharing the cost of a bookkeeper/accounting position through inter-governmental agreements for centralized/regionalized vouchering, timekeeping, grant management
			Vouchering and completing Commission and other entity tasks accurately and in a timely manner
			Increasing efficiencies by forming partnerships and creative solutions that drive toward efficient use of limited resources
			High ratio of non-Commission revenues relative to total revenues
			Low ratio of administrative expenses to total revenue
			Reducing administration & overhead costs where feasible
			Increasing operating margin through increase in revenue or reduction in administrative costs
			Reduction in the need for competitive “soft money” funds
			Employing a mechanism of “bulk grant writing” or districts pooling funding to get grants written
			Analyzing and reduction non-grant reimbursable expenses
			Currently using the most efficient practices in timekeeping; purchasing; bookkeeping; accounting; payroll; vouchering; auditing; budget work; grant reviews; seeking funding; grant writing, management & accounting; district financial management; non-project contracting, procurement; interest on debt; monthly expenditure and income reporting; taxes (property, sales, B&O)
Action Plan:			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>

<b>Operations &amp; Procedures:</b>		
		Currently using management studies, effective records management & retention
		Utilize templates/boiler plate/checklists to develop effective plans accurately and quickly.
		Utilizing co-management, partnership and co-location with NRCS past consolidations, staff sharing, cluster engineer (and the concept).
		Utilizing new technology to reduce administrative efficiencies
		Signed up for surplus equipment availability from state and federal sources
		Forming partnerships and using MOAs and Inter-Local Agreements to secure and share resources
		Overhead costs of districts are typically lower than comparable costs at government agencies
		Evaluating number of grants/contracts as compared to staff costs or staff FTEs
		Looked at the WSCC 'good standing checklist' for potential administrative efficiencies
		Working on reducing time required to work with some NRCS staff and programs.
		Examined redundant administrative tasks performed by one district.
		Use databases, accounting software and other efficient methods to track and report progress.
		High use of technology and systems for accounting, data management, communications and reporting.
		Coordinating more closely on natural resource issues in a geographic area.
		Increase use of webinars, teleconferences, and videoconferences to conduct meetings.
		Continuing to automate; standardize planning; progress tracking processes; efficiency of reporting and other financial requirements.
		Using CPDS data system for reporting BMPs and potential project funding through WSCC that can share data to other agencies.
		Examining and making decisions to reduce some travel, lodging, per diem; some training; manager working with board; elections;
		Sharing of information between districts, including templates for common outreach materials, program materials, contract templates, example policy/procedure manual templates, and much more
		Currently using the most efficient practices for answering the mail & general communications; representation at meetings; telecommunications; information technology (IT); conferences & meetings, other
		Currently have most efficient risk management including insurances (liability, casualty, other); bonding for board members and staff; legal assistance; legal services; security; licenses & permits; other
Action Plan:		

<b>Personnel:</b>		
		Sharing of staff with specialized expertise; sharing of expertise, resources, and tools; collaboration with partners and other districts; further the mission and goals of the technical employees; development group; flexible work hours and place; share resources with non-district entities.

			Sharing management services in smaller adjoining districts.
			Have a low number of administrative personnel as a ratio of technical staff.
			Have a high number of experienced workers and /or a high number of years of service per employee; ability to multi-task and work different programs or the ability to specialize and share that expertise with other districts.
			Have examined examples of districts sharing administrative expertise and capability among themselves to reduce duplication and lower expenses.
			Attending training where options/ideas are presented and shared; use/promoting area meetings or clusters of districts to explore best practices and efficient ways to use available/limited resources.
			Attend WADE training where options and ideas are presented.
			District Supervisors with manager are conducting a workload analysis including time and budget impacts.
			Teaching board members and lead staff to develop processes of budget review that promotes a true fiscally responsible government entity.
			Share Employees (administrative and/or technical).
Action Plan:			
<b>Vehicles, Equipment, Supplies &amp; Physical Plant:</b>			
			Our district is currently using the most efficient practices such as; copying & printing; general office supplies; other goods & services.
			Utilizing a competitive system for equipment purchases, equipment maintenance; and other.
			Utilizing an efficient vehicles maintenance & repair system; consideration of replacement costs; fuel costs; mileage records.
			Our district is currently using the most efficient practices in rent, utilities, phone; facility rent & leasehold improvements; facility maintenance; custodial & grounds maintenance; other.
Action Plan:			

<b>Consolidation or Partnering:</b>			
			Forming clusters of districts with similar resource concerns - formally uniting them to solicit and administer grants such as is being done with the Puget Sound Districts.
			Examined administrative efficiencies through consolidating multiple adjacent small districts in similar ecological areas.
			Multiple districts in areas (perhaps in same counties or adjacent districts) doing similar functions, programs, and projects - likely should merge – streamlining board and administrative functions.
Action Plan:			

## Appendix F. Fact Sheet on Conservation District Administrative Efficiencies

### Where can administrative efficiencies be found?

One of the early actions the Task Force worked to accomplish was describing what an administratively effective and efficient conservation district looked like. To accomplish this, the Task Force identified common areas consistent with all districts. The groupings, with examples, included:

**Finances & Accounting** (bookkeeping, purchasing, payroll, etc.);

**Personnel** (training, supervision, human resource needs, etc.);

**Vehicles & Transportation** (vehicle maintenance & repair, fuel, replacement costs, etc.);

**Physical Plant** (rent, utilities, custodial, etc.);

**District Board** (per diem, elections, basic “keep the doors open” expenses, memberships, etc.);

**Communications** (representation at meetings, telecommunications; information technology, etc.);

**Supplies** (copying & printing; general office supplies; other goods & services, etc.);

**Equipment** (computers; printers; copy machines, etc.);

**Risk Management** (insurance, bonding for board members and staff, legal assistance, etc.); and

**Operations** (annual/long range planning, records management, etc.).

### Within these administrative functions, where can efficiencies be gained?

The Task Force then took the administrative groupings and began identifying opportunities where districts could improve. Each area of improvement included several ideas and options for consideration. Areas with an example are:

**Bookkeeping/Accounting:** Have financial clusters, such as one bookkeeper for multiple districts or districts share bookkeepers for centralized/regionalized vouchering, timekeeping, grant management, etc.

**Training:** Board and staff training to develop processes of budget review that promote a fiscally responsible entity.

**Procedures/Rules:** Continue to: automate; standardize planning; improve tracking processes; and seek reporting efficiencies.

**Consolidate:** Merging multiple districts by area (perhaps in same counties or adjacent districts) doing similar functions, programs, and projects. Streamlining of board and administrative functions.

**Share Employees:** Share administrative and/or technical services in smaller adjoining districts.

### What early administrative actions have conservation districts already made?

Conservation Districts have already begun initiating cost-cutting efforts during the 2011-13 biennium including have: inter-governmental agreements developed among districts to share management services (9 CDs); the cost of bookkeeper/accounting personnel shared (11 CDs); and, shared engineering positions are currently providing services to multi-district areas, coordinated by the participating districts on a highest priority need (7 positions).

Consolidation deliberations are occurring in 4 of the 5 multi-district counties. Districts here are engaging in discussions of sharing employees and reducing administrative overhead through consolidation. SCC staff are providing facilitation assistance in these on-going, multi-district board considerations which include conservation program delivery, representation, benefits, drawbacks, and procedures for consolidating districts along county boundaries.

### Measuring success

Of greatest importance is how to measure success. The Task Force discussed several ideas for how to measure district success in administrative efficiencies including; reduction in repetitive functions, relation of administrative efficiencies to effectiveness in delivering conservation services. A key next step will be developing qualitative measures to evaluate efficiencies, possibly through benchmarks, that tie to legislative expectations and audit performance. Work will continue in this area as districts learn of these opportunities in the coming months, and evaluate the fiscal impacts. SCC staff and commissioners will continue working to develop measures for analyzing administrative efficiency actions taken by districts while working to maintain the high level of program delivery that districts perform and to which participating landowners are accustomed.

## Appendix G. Competitive Efficiency Grant Program Application Form



### BACKGROUND

The 2011-13 Operating Budget directed SCC to reduce pass-through monies to conservation districts by \$400,000 to encourage administrative efficiencies. In response, SCC created the Task Force on Administrative Efficiencies.

The goal of the Task Force was to identify opportunities and strategies conservation districts could employ to reduce costs and encourage efficiencies. The Task Force completed this goal. On its own initiative, the Task Force defined **administrative expenses**, considered **mechanisms to measure administrative efficiencies**, and identified **characteristics of conservation districts that are very efficient or inefficient**.

To focus the discussion, administrative expenses was defined as: *Expenses that can be related to the operation of the organization as a whole, that are different from the expenses needed to complete individual conservation projects or activities.*

### EXAMPLES OF AREAS FOR POTENTIAL EFFICIENCIES

**Finances & Accounting** (bookkeeping, purchasing, payroll, etc.);  
**Personnel** (training, technical assistance, supervision, human resource needs, etc.);  
**Vehicles & Transportation** (vehicle maintenance & repair, fuel, replacement costs, etc.);  
**Physical Plant** (rent, utilities, custodial, etc.);  
**District Board** (per diem, elections, basic “keep the doors open” expenses, memberships, etc.);  
**Communications** (representation at meetings, telecommunications; information technology, etc.);  
**Supplies** (copying & printing; general office supplies; other goods & services, etc.);  
**Equipment** (computers; printers; copy machines, etc.);  
**Risk Management** (insurance, bonding for board members and staff, legal assistance, etc.); and  
**Operations** (annual/long range planning, records management, etc.).

### COMPETITIVE EFFICIENCY GRANT PROGRAM

To implement this budget requirement, the Commission is implementing a competitive grant program for conservation districts. Under this program, conservation districts may submit proposals to implement efficiencies activities. Districts are encouraged to submit proposals that, when implemented and proven, can be replicated in other districts. Two or more districts may also partner in a joint proposal.

Applicants are encouraged to review the Task Force report, which can be found on the Commission's web page at <http://www.scc.wa.gov/index.php/Download-document/2123-Administrative-Efficiencies-Report.html>

**APPLICATION**

- Total Available \$200,000 (FY13 gfs)
- Maximum per application \$35,000
- Funding Period 7/20/12 – 6/30/13
- Ranked by 3 SCC members & 3 staff.
- Awarded by July 20, 2012
- Evaluation – maximum 30 points
  - ✓ High 5 points
  - ✓ Medium 3 points
  - ✓ Low 1 point
  - ✓ Does not meet criteria 0 points
  - ✓ *The six individual scores will be averaged and assigned a base score.*

Lead Applicant:

Co- Lead Applicant (if applicable):

Project Title (maximum 15 words)

Total Cost

Amount of Request

Source of additional funding support

Project Description (maximum of 25 words)

Pilot  Study  Functional

Project Need (maximum 50 words) (5 points)

Project Benefits (maximum 50 words) (5 points)

Linkage to Work Plan and Natural Resources (maximum 50 words) (5 points)

Management Capability and Local Support (maximum 50 words) (5 points)

Return on Investment/Savings (10 points)

Use a minimum of 2 efficiency descriptions defined on page 1

## Appendix H. Competitive Efficiency Grant Program Project Proposals

Administrative Efficiencies Grant						Brief Project Description
Project ID	District	Request	Average Score	Amount Funded	Rank	
19	S. Douglas	\$ 35,000	26.83	35,000	1	with <b>Cascadia &amp; Foster Creek</b> - expanding technician expertise into So. Douglas
20	Stevens	\$ 22,600	26.83	22,600	1	with <b>Ferry &amp; Pend Oreille</b> - Operations standarization for the tri-district area - to include payroll, accounting, inventory, etc.
4	Jefferson	\$ 4,000	26.17	4,000	2	with <b>Whidbey Island</b> - pilot project to share bookkeeping staff from Whidbey with Jefferson
25	Whatcom	\$ 34,807	26.17	34,807	2	with <b>Skagit, Snohomish, King</b> - increase planning efficiencies with innovative field technologies and uniform planning templates
11	Palouse Rk Lk	\$ 35,000	26.00	35,000	3	with <b>Pine Creek &amp; Lincoln</b> - employ grant writer
15	Snohomish	\$ 35,000	26.00	35,000	3	with <b>Clallam, King, Pierce</b> - additional engineering services for puget sound districts
31	Cascadia	\$ 35,000	25.83	33,593	4	with <b>So Douglas &amp; Foster Creek</b> - shared monitoring, landowner assistance, accounting savings
Unfunded Projects		Amount	Average Score	Brief Project Description		
13	Pierce	\$ 35,000	25.17	With King to support implementation of rates and charges		
29	Whidbey Is.	\$ 9,000	25.17	Pilot project with PS Districts to create CD-Cloud for virtual library		
26	Whidbey Is.	\$ 5,000	25.00	Create database of staff expertise within PS Districts for staff sharing		
21	Thurston	\$ 35,000	24.17	With 3 SW districts secure centralized accounting services		
32	Cen Klickitat	\$ 35,000	24.00	With East Klickitat, No. Yakima, Underwood districts to hire an assistant to aid engineer with water quality monitoring & other field project duties.		
28	Whidbey Island	\$ 5,000	23.83	With Snohomish to submit LID applications on behalf of PS districts		
5	King	\$ 35,000	23.50	Create and fund PS Districts Caucus Coordination with 11 PS Districts		
14	Skagit	\$ 35,000	23.50	With Whatcom to develop and implement an outreach program to address the Shellfish Initiative		

Unfunded Projects		Amount	Average Score	Brief Project Description
23	Underwood	\$ 5,000	23.33	With Clark CD hire, train and share staff expertise
10	Palouse	\$ 35,000	22.83	Palouse with Whitman Districts to share administrative/financial staff
27	Whidbey Is.	\$ 6,800	22.67	Survey, review, identify options for accounting software and financial practices to be used by all districts
30	Tech Dist Empl Dev	\$ 35,000	22.67	Achieve statewide competency model for District technical staff proficiencies for planning
2	Clark	\$ 20,000	22.50	Funding to secure county assessment
12	Pierce	\$ 35,000	21.83	With Whid Island & Pierce to construct district messages and refine purpose statements-providing product statewide
33	Foster Creek	\$ 35,000	21.40	With Cascadia & So Douglas to hire a grant writer
16	Snohomish	\$ 35,000	21.33	With King to provide services to coordinate services to the City of Bothell.
7	Lincoln	\$ 35,000	21.17	Outreach & Education for livestock producers in Lincoln, Pine Creek, Whitman, Palouse & Palouse Rock Lake Districts
18	Snohomish	\$ 35,000	21.17	Pilot integration of data/project management with SCC's CPDS system
22	Underwood	\$ 15,000	21.17	Update to IT system
6	Kitsap	\$ 7,910	20.67	Purchase new copier
24	Underwood	\$ 15,000	20.33	New vehicle
17	Snohomish	\$ 35,000	20.00	With PS Districts to fund participation & representation, identify & share
3	E. Klickitat	\$ 35,000	19.67	Feasibility study for office consolidation with NRCS/FSA/Cent. Klickitat, IT consultant, Employee benefit pkg.
8	N. Yakima	\$ 35,000	18.83	Feasibility study for property acquisition & construction
9	Okanogan	\$ 35,000	17.50	Fuel efficient vehicle, priority training for staff and supervisors, rent
1	Benton	\$ 35,000	16.00	Benton / Franklin staff sharing plan for management & accounting

**Total Request \$ 885,117**

## **Appendix I. Administrative Efficiencies Grant Program Final Discovery**

### **Final Report from Awarded districts**

**Cascadia** – For the first quarter, Cascadia’s scope of work consisted of monitoring and maintaining to protect the overall survival from the last three planting seasons. With assistance from US Fish & Wildlife, Wenatchee High School and the Washington State Conservation Corps; they performed maintenance on 16 riparian sites by removing over 16,000 bamboo stakes and 7,000 browse guards in the: Entiat River, Tyee Spring 1 & 2, Wenatchee Watershed (North Road/Chumstick, Yaksum Creek, and CMZ 2 Lower Sleepy Hollow Island), and the Entiat Watershed (Indian Creek, Tillicum creek, Mom & Me Gardens, Bortz Road, RM 12, Keystone Ranch, WDFW Lower Entiat, Stillwater 1 & 2, Medsker Canyon, Mud creek, River Mile 12, Tyee Spring 1) areas. During the second and third quarters, there was little work done with the exception of administrative maintenance so the major push could be immediately available for farming season due to the seasonal weather change. Cascadia provided support to Foster Creek by developing vegetation monitoring protocol and conducting the initial monitoring surveys of the planting sites. As well as provided direct support to South Douglas as a cooperator. Cascadia was instrumental in establishing riparian vegetation monitoring protocols and monitoring on approximately 11 restoration sites in the Chelan County.

**Jefferson County** – From August 2012 through June 2013, Jefferson County entered into a joint Memorandum Of Agreement with Whidbey Island Conservation district to share bookkeeping to relieve staff burden in support of, and according to, the guidelines of the administrative efficiencies grant. The support was only limited to one day a month with assisting in the preparation and submittal of vouchers from multiple funding sources. This would eventually train the Jefferson county staff to take over from Whidbey Island on a permanent basis. The opportunities provided by this grant were extremely valuable in the efficient and accurate submittal of grant vouchers, grant tracking and accountability, and training that ultimately resulted in Jefferson County Conservation district’s ability to independently fulfill these responsibilities.

**Palouse Rock-Lake** – Palouse Rock-Lake used this grant to contract with grant writer in the hopes of giving them a competitive advantage for receiving potential grants that Palouse Rock-Lake fits the criteria for. The opportunity that Palouse Rock-Lake’s grant writer was able to secure funding for the conservation district was with The Verle Kaiser Conservation Endowment Proposal which continued the. Opportunities they are still waiting to know if the district has secured the grant funding for are: the Five Star Urban Waters Restoration Program, NRS Conservation Innovations Grant-Nutrient Management and Assessing Risk Incorporating Oilseed Crops into Cereal Grain Rotations in the Inland Northwest due to the fact the application deadline are after the Administrative Efficiencies grant close out date.

**Snohomish** – Snohomish partnered with Clallam, King, Pierce, Whatcom and Whidbey Island to help with their administrative services, as well as partnering with NRCS for various projects. Snohomish was able to successfully complete the following: Hoggarth Bridget project, the Portage Creek hydrology new pipeline project, TLC, Pinkley, Manorcare, KCD Gunderson, Hemingson, Pierce and Clallam rain garden site designs, Hima Farms lift station design, address Andrew's drainage issue, Carelton Storm water pipeline design, Wilcox Farms photovoltaic system design and pup station, Hooves with Hearts drainage improvement and operational efficiencies, created Poortinga Dairy pipe & gutter designs, assisted with Whidbey Island's drainage project, provided cost estimates with Clallam to B&T Cattle Co. for drainage project, developed standard costs for waste storage structures with roofs, Pinkely SWPP, Arlington wetlands tour, Pond 6 water quality, evaluated ditch system for Boone Dairy, evaluate compost bin replacements and buffer needs for Warm Beach, held Tulalip Tribes meeting for review on creek crossing design on Filbert acres, attended Edmonds CC Earth Day event, evaluated Richards HUA and waste storage, and visited Stanfield in assessing road flooding issues.

**South Douglas** – Unfortunately, shortly before South Douglas was awarded funding from this grant, Chelan County was devastated by wild fires losing 80,000 acres. They were able to learn firsthand on the technical assistance needed to implement a Firewise Program for their own county. South Douglas County was able to form the community's wildfire protection plan (CWPP) with assessments throughout the county. Also through this program, South Douglas was able to establish a final draft booklet on targeting noxious weeds in Douglas County.

**Stevens County** – Sharing this grant, Stevens was able to extend the administrative opportunities to Pend Oreille and Ferry. They upgraded their financial systems to BIAS. BIAS is a software system that is specifically designed for public entities, such as cities and water, fire, park, and conservation districts. They were able to have a staff member from each county be personally trained in using the BIAS system. The BIAS system allows them to enter data for payroll, including daily notes with tracking tasks more easily for grant vouchering. Stevens County was able to use a considerable amount of time to update and review their inventory list. This was something that before this grant was not afforded to them.

**Whatcom** – Whatcom was able to effectively adopt technology into District livestock planning and beyond (tested for riparian and forestry planning; increase their communication and collaboration between districts and create a more efficient and uniform planning process and product). Whatcom administered training to personnel that increased their technical proficiency and understanding of planning topics that provided for better quality and efficient technical assistance to clients. Through information technology and sharing of expertise, Whatcom was able to increase their ability to communicate with producers and each other. Adopting the use of iPads and applications for field inventory assessment and planning, it increased efficiency, productivity, and quality of service in the field and office. The technology advancement opened a new window of opportunity, that Whatcom was able to gift to other districts on how to properly implement the equipment state wide.