



# Washington State Conservation Commission

## Conservation Commission and Conservation District Action to Address Salmon Recovery and Water Quality

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### **Background:**

On September 25, 2013, Michael Grayum, Executive Director of the NWIFC submitted a letter to Mark Clark, Executive Director of the State Conservation Commission requesting the Commission apply the NOAA buffer table to state funds provided by the Commission to conservation districts. The Commission considered the request, held discussions with conservation districts and held a public meeting on the request. On January 16, 2014 the Conservation Commission took the following action.

### **Action Taken:**

The Conservation Commission declined to condition funding on the NOAA Fisheries buffer table, but recognized the importance of ensuring Commission programs and conservation district activities address state natural resource concerns of water quality and riparian species habitat, especially salmonid habitat. The Commission directed staff to take the following actions:

- Identify ways to increase landowner participation in incentive-based programs.
- Evaluate whether existing standards and practices used by conservation districts when working with landowners address natural resource concerns, and improve the process for changing the standards and practices (if necessary).
- Evaluate the current system of identifying natural resource concerns at the watershed scale and how conservation districts incorporate this information into their work plans to determine whether changes are needed in this process.
- Consider how these issues might be included in the next biennial budget development process for conservation districts and the Conservation Commission.
- Identify funding sources necessary to assist conservation districts in implementing any recommended program changes.
- Evaluate watershed scale processes to identify “lessons learned” that could inform work with conservation districts on these topics.
- Identify, evaluate, and where appropriate implement monitoring approaches that will assist in tracking progress on improving natural resources concerns and apply adaptive management principles based on monitoring results. Benchmarks would also need to be identified to determine whether progress is being made.

- Continue support for the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP).
- Continue to support the efforts of the Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD), and conservation districts individually, in their efforts to build and continue strong working relationships with tribes.

These efforts will be done in close coordination with conservation districts and other partners, including tribes, state and local governments, federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations.

**Next Steps:**

The Conservation Commission identified a Commission member subcommittee to assist staff with developing a process to implement these steps and to add more detail where necessary.

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