



5-Year Plan (2014 to 2019) Cowlitz Conservation District

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



Organization of the Cowlitz Conservation District

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

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

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

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

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

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

Function of the Cowlitz Conservation District

Approved 8/6/2014

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

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

Who We Serve and Why

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

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

Professional and technical specialists from various agencies, both public and private, who assist the District through a memorandum of understanding, extend help provided by the District in this planning process.

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

Mission of the Cowlitz Conservation District

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

Vision of the Cowlitz Conservation District

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

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

Values of the Cowlitz Conservation District

- Education of local land users on conservation practices by means of technical assistance.
- Sound resource management for agriculture, forestry, and other land uses emphasizing soil, water, air, plants, animals and human considerations.
- Economic viability for community and landowners.
- Monitor and encourage the use of new or technical developments that offer promise toward enhancing conservation of natural resources, or improving the quality of our resources.

Natural Resource Priorities and Metrics:

The Cowlitz County Conservation District Supervisors have developed with input from the public and stakeholders the following specific priorities regarding natural resources within the District. Additional input from the public during annual meetings is provided in appendix C. The input is directly consistent with the priorities identified. The priority natural resource issues are given in the following.

- Promote watershed health and water quality by assisting landowners, land managers, and resource agencies with coordinated watershed management plans that are ecologically and economically sound.
- Promote fish habitat restoration and provide technical assistance in the reduction of erosion-sedimentation in streams.
- Explore partnerships with other governmental entities and agencies to manage Toutle River sedimentation

- Actively encourage conservation education through community outreach, especially to new land owners and small land owners and through programs in Cowlitz County schools that will introduce students to natural resources conservation. Encourage land use and management education, including programs for new and small land owners and best practices education. Maintain a strong program to keep the public informed of conservation needs, benefits, and progress.
- Reduce the burden of non-native, invasive and noxious plants in the District and educate landowners regarding such plants.
- Encourage the retention of high quality forest land for forestry and related uses and promote forest management practices that are ecologically and economically sound.
- Encourage the retention of prime and unique agriculture land for agriculture use and promote agriculture and land use management practices that incorporate best practices and are ecologically and economically sound.
- Encourage the management of wetlands in a manner that will retain their value and function.
- Encourage cooperative planning among agencies involved in land use activities in both urban and rural areas.
- Provide the County Commissioners and local planners with resource data and interpretations to assist them in making sound land use decisions.

Natural Resource Metrics

A set of metrics was developed for each priority area. It is difficult to specify metrics or measurable outcomes in distant out years. Because of funding uncertainties, ecosystem changes and natural events, such as fire or flooding, specific metrics become more speculative with the passage of time. The Cowlitz County Conservation District has a set of metrics that involve monitoring specific parameters over time in order to measure improvement. The set of metrics for each priority area is provided below.

- Watershed health and water quality: The District will monitor the number of landowner agreements, the number of watershed management plans and will establish baseline water quality measurements for future monitoring.
- Fish habitat restoration: The District will monitor yearly the number of landowner agreements, species diversity by stream, number of instream structures and number of linear feet of stream bank protected from erosion. Estimate sediment load in applicable streams. The extent of riparian restoration will also be monitored.
- Non-Native and noxious plants: Track population density of invasive species in areas treated; monitor the extent of reestablished native plants and establish a baseline of invasive species critical areas.
- Forestry Enhancement: Track acres actively managed: acres under conservation plan and diversity of selected forest stands
- Agricultural land retention and land use management: Monitor acres under usage for agriculture. Track changes in land use based on assessors data.

Priority Geographic Areas

The Conservation District has conducted meetings and public outreach forums that have identified areas that the Conservation District, stakeholders and the public deem priority geographic areas from a variety of perspectives including landowner issues, noxious and invasive weeds, instream habitat (both resident and anadromous fisheries), and forest and agricultural land use concerns. These areas include:

- The Cowlitz River watershed with emphasis on the Toutle River subbasin. Work in the Toutle River watershed will require interaction with the Cowlitz County Commissioners and several other organizations and agencies to address the status and plans for sediment control, particularly the plans for the sediment retention dam.
- All waters flowing into the Columbia River in Cowlitz County,
- The Coweeman River watershed.

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

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

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

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

Prime farmland within the county is under increased pressure for conversion to urban and industrial use (“Woodland Bottoms”). A map of Cowlitz County priority geographic areas is shown in Appendix B.

Matrix of Watersheds

To assist the district with conservation programs a watershed matrix has been developed that is intended to provide a quick overview of local watersheds. The matrix includes physical data about each watershed along with qualitative information regarding critical geographic areas discussed above.

Information and Education Priorities and Goals:

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

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

District Operations Priorities, Goals:

- The District goals are to be effective and efficient in accounting, grant vouchering, personnel management, Supervisor elections & appointments, Supervisor & Staff training, development, annual audits, and long range & annual planning & reporting. Cowlitz Conservation District will properly manage public monies.
- Increase efficiency of District Operations resulting in conservation on the ground. Continue to promote the concept of a natural resource “One-Stop Center” for natural resource needs. Coordinate with NRCS, WSU Cooperative Extension, DNR Stewardship, WDFW, DOE, Cowlitz County Weed Control Board and others.
- The District will continue to be good stewards of District owned lands. The District visited the property in 2014 and will review and update the property plan in 2015.

Trends Affecting Conservation in the Cowlitz Conservation District

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

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

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

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

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

Strategies to Address Trends

Conservation Strategy

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

Population Strategy

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

Funding Strategy

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

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

Legislative strategy

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

Staffing Needs

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

Annual Budget Needs

Current Budget needs \$197,000.00/year.

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

Key Decision Makers

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

APPENDIX A

Priority Actions – FY 2014 - 2019

Program Area: District Operations

Goal(s): To maintain effective and efficient operation including accounting, grant administration, personnel management, and implementation of district policies

Funding Source(s): The principal funding sources for this program includes WSCC implementation, WSCC Good Governance, and GSRO funds

Annual Activities	Target Dates	Person Responsible	Time (Days) Required
District Operations			
Submit grant vouchers and misc. grant paperwork as required	Monthly	BK/Mgr	30/6
Prepare business information for Board meetings AP/AR	Monthly	BK/Mgr/RT	30/6/2
Mid month AP/AR	Monthly	BK/Mgr	15/2
Annual plan of accomplishments	August	Mgr/BK	2/1
Submit reports as required (quarterly and semi annual reports)		Mgr/BK	6/6
3 rd Quarter	11/15		
4 th Quarter	01/15		
1 st Quarter	04/15		
2 nd Quarter	07/15		
Participate in the SW Area Meeting	October	Staff/Brd	3/0.5
Prepare for and conduct annual election	October–April	BK/Mgr	5/0.5
Arrangements to participate in WACD Annual Meeting	Oct. – Nov.	BK/Brd	5/0.5
Prepare Annual Plan of Work/ Review LRP	May	Mgr/BK	1/4
Complete and submit annual financial report			
Complete internal audit	April	BK/Mgr	9/1
Apply for Good Governance Funding	April	BK	5
Continue to apply for grant funding to help	April	BK	1

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accomplish the District goals.		Mgr	20
Long Range and Annual Plans	Ongoing	Mgr	1
Draft Salmon Recovery Project Proposals	Ongoing	Mgr	7
Draft Centennial Clean Water Fund Proposals	Ongoing	Mgr	7
Manage and maintain District owned land	7/14 – 6/15	Mgr/Rt/Brd	2/2/5

Program Area: Watershed Management

Goals: Continue to develop and secure funding to maintain the District's capacity to assist watershed communities with planning and implementation on a watershed level.

Funding Source(s): The principal funding sources for this program includes WSCC implementation and Cowlitz County, .

Activities for FY2014	Target Dates	Person Responsible	Time (Days) Required
<u>Mill / Abernathy / Germany Creek Habitat Restoration (GSRO)</u>			
Continue assisting landowners to plan, fund, implement, and monitor stream restoration projects. We are currently working on 1 project proposal for the 2014 SRFB process and have 1 additional interested party in the Germany Creek watershed.	Annual stepwise process Plan Fund Design/Permit Implement Monitor	Mgr/RT/PE/ BK	15/15/5
Utilize existing projects in an outreach effort to inform residents of opportunities available to them.		Mgr / RT	1/2
Collaborate with landowners, Wahkiakum Conservation District, IMW, and LCFRB in efforts to increase implementation of projects within the MAG watersheds			
<u>Coweeman River Community Watershed Project</u>			
Implement 3 funded projects and continue to plan, design, and implement projects with cooperators.	7/14-6/15	Mgr/BK/RT	40/10/50
Implement the Coweeman River Knotweed treatment and riparian restoration project funded through SRFB.	Annually thru 2017	Mgr/ET	10/30
<u>Arkansas Creek Community Watershed</u>			
Design, permit, implement, and monitor two funded project sites.	October 2016	Mgr / RT	30/20
Continue assisting landowners to plan, fund,			

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implement, and monitor stream restoration projects.	Ongoing		
Continue to provide support to watershed community groups that have initiated watershed planning efforts as needed. Cowlitz watersheds include Leckler Creek, Whittle Creek, and Clark Creek, and Silver Lake watersheds.	7/14 – 6/15	Mgr/BK/RT	3/2/2

Program Area: Technical Assistance
 Goals: To coordinate the delivery of and maintain the District's capacity to provide technical assistance to landowners within the district promoting sound resource management.

Funding Source(s): The principal funding sources for this program includes WSCC implementation*, WSCC Livestock*, WSCC CREP*, Cowlitz County, and Private Mitigation funds.

Activities for FY2014	Target Dates	Person Responsible	Time (Days) Required
Technical Assistance			
<u>Conservation Reserve Programs</u>			
Provide assistance to landowners interested in the program by assisting with getting them enrolled in the program, conducting site inventory, preparing management plans, and implementing plans (1 site anticipated)	6/15	RT/Mgr/BK	8/2/2
<u>Category 3 Projects</u>			
Continue to plan and submit category 3 projects and implement as awards are realized.	Variable	Mgr/RT/BK	Variable
<u>Family Forest Fish Passage Program Assistance</u> Provide assistance to landowners and agencies to support applications for family forest fish passage project. Activities include conducting barrier assessments, generating project cost estimates, implementing projects. (None anticipated in the foreseeable future)			
<u>Standard technical assistance</u>			
Assist walk-in/call-in customers with technical assistance needs. Typically over 150 per year.	6/15	Mgr/RT/BK	8/8/8
<u>Mitigation Projects</u> Assist landowners with implementing project plans and designs funded through project mitigation funds.	Variable	Mgr/ET/Rt/	Variable

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Work with Cowlitz County to develop a fee in lieu mitigation program.	December 14	Bk Mgr/Board	10/1
<u>Cowlitz County</u> Continue to develop and implement project in collaboration with Cowlitz Co. Public Works through our interlocal agreement and task orders Continue collaborating on special purpose projects (Comp Plan, Water Rule, VSP)	Variable	Mgr	6

Program Area: Information, Education, and Outreach

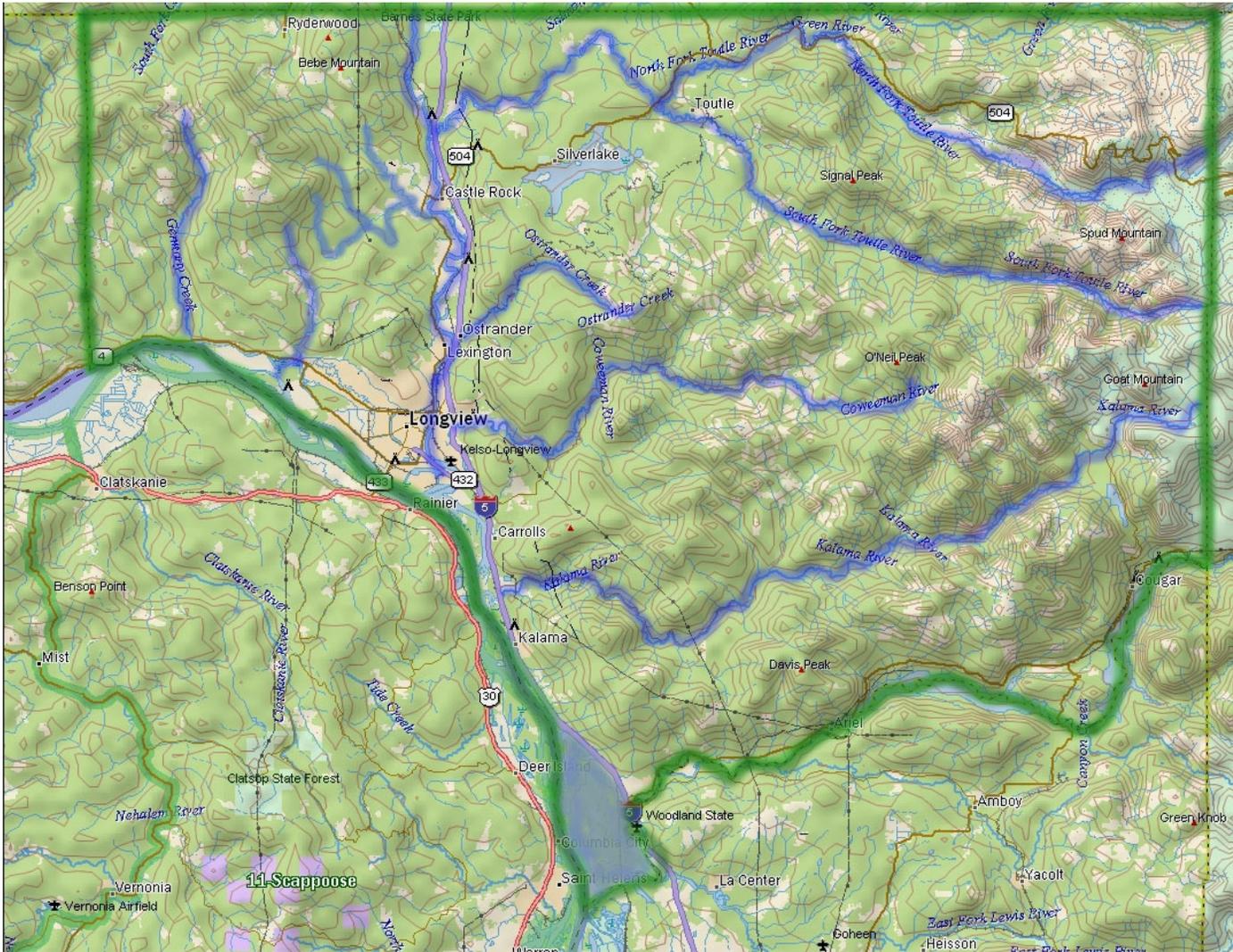
Goals: Continue providing community service activities and promote an understanding of land use through sponsorship of forums, meetings, training sessions, participation in local natural resources oriented events, and use of local media.

Funding Source(s): The principal funding sources for this program includes Cowlitz County Title III funds and WSCC implementation.

Activities for FY2014	Target Dates	Person Responsible	Time (Days) Required
Education/Outreach			
<u>Coached Planning Workshops</u>			
Partner with Department of Natural Resources and Cooperative Extension to host local workshops	6/15	Mgr	2
<u>Envirothon</u>			
Participate in the SW regional Envirothon	5/15	Mgr/BK	1/5
<u>Tree Sale</u>			
Partner with Cowlitz Farm Forestry Association to conduct an annual tree sale to support local students and adults participating in natural resource education activities	4/15	BK/Mgr	2/0.5

<u>Cowlitz County Fair</u>			
Participate in the county fair by developing and displaying an exhibit in the natural resources building. Cooperate with building exhibitors to foster a cooperative effort to manage the building and draw in fair-goers.	8/14	BK/Mgr	5/0.5
<u>Miscellaneous Activities</u>			
Continue to participate when possible in local activities oriented around natural resources (e.g. earth day celebrations, classroom partnerships, and assistance to student groups for tree planting days, annual tree sale, and 5 th Grade Forestry)	6/15	BK/Mgr	11/2

APPENDIX B
Priority Geographical Areas Map



APPENDIX C INPUT FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Long Range Plan Work Meeting / Annual Meeting
Cowlitz Conservation District
Thursday March 21, 2013 @ Parker's Restaurant – Castle Rock, WA

Question –Resource Concerns?

Answers –

- 1.) Cowlitz Water Quality, ash sediment, control &/or stabilize
- 2.) Riparian zones are important, including wetlands
- 3.) Knotweed – destroy on both Delameter and Monahan Creeks
- 4.) The Columbia River and Fisheries due to declining environmental issues
- 5.) Look into Goble Creek in Rose Valley
- 6.) Check knotweed on Turner Crk/Rose Valley

Question – Assistance Needs?

Answers –

- 1.) Please push Cowlitz Cty Park division to manage all spoils sites they own
- 2.) Put a fish ladder around the falls on Owl Creek near Rose Valley Rd; thereby opening up miles of stream

Question – Priority Areas?

Answers –

- 1.) Continue with Coweeman watershed project (Is it still in process? *Gina*)
- 2.) Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers

Question – What can we do better?

Answers –

- 1.) Figure out some way to convince fishermen that you are helping the streams. Most people don't understand what you are doing; they think this work is harming fishing holes. Maybe an ad in the newspaper?

Question – What are we doing right?

Answers –

- 1.) Excellent organization on Coweeman – Keep it up
- 2.) Good job
- 3.) Conservation District doing a great job asking for coordination with other natural resource agencies
- 4.) I think you guys are doing a very good job!
- 5.) Just thanks for all your work!!

Long Range Plan Work Meeting / Annual Meeting

Cowlitz Conservation District

Thursday March 27, 2014 @ Parker's Restaurant – Castle Rock, WA

Question –Resource Concerns?

Answers –

1. Land available for recreation use
2. Fish Streams and restrictions placed upon them.
3. Pasture improvement to lessen sediment and lessen invasive weeds.
4. Wetland preservation and wetland restoration.
5. Fisheries decline

Question – Assistance Needs?

Answers –

1. How to Identify fish streams / Landowner responsibilities with respect to types of streams.
2. Technical assistance and cost share assistance.

Question – Priority Areas?

Answers –

1. Continue community based project work.
2. Coweeman River (fish augmentation)

Question – What can we do better?

Answers –

1. No Feedback

Question – What are we doing right?

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Answers –

2. No Feedback