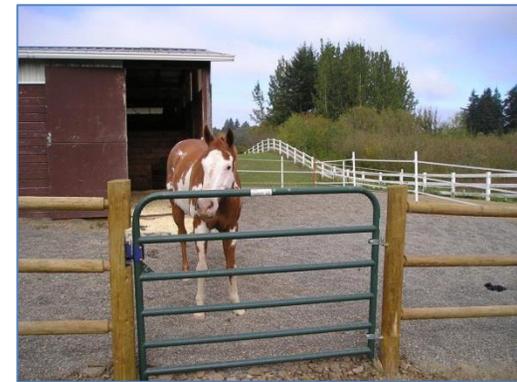




FY 2016 (7/1/15 – 6/30/16) Annual Work Plan Whatcom Conservation District (Adopted May 14, 2015)

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Mission

“To assist land managers with their conservation choices.”

Vision

“Whatcom County shall have healthy soils, water, air and ecosystems for the benefit of our communities. Its natural resource industries (farms, forests and fisheries) will thrive. Our District will be seen not only as an effective implementer of actions but also an agency that assists anyone who is willing to cooperate in advancing these goals.”

Natural Resource Priorities

Priority #1 -- Water Quality: Bacterial contamination resulted in the closure of nearly 500 acres of Portage Bay to commercial shellfish harvest. Drayton Harbor is either closed to commercial shellfish harvesting or conditionally open during a few months of the year. A portion of Birch Bay is closed to the recreational harvest of shellfish. There are a number of significant sources of bacteria including failing septic systems, waste water treatment plants, wildlife and livestock. Excess nutrients negatively impact surface and groundwater. Conservation District programs can address livestock contributions of bacteria and nutrients.

The District will work to: Protect and enhance water quality for beneficial uses by addressing nutrient and fecal coliform contamination of the Nooksack River and its lowland tributaries; California, Dakota and Terrell Creeks; and Sumas River.

This is a regional resource priority see:

- Executive Order 12-07 Washington’s Response to Ocean Acidification, December 2012;
- 2012-2013 Action Agenda for Puget Sound (August 2012)
 - C3. Prevent, Reduce and Control Agricultural Runoff

Other entities engaged in addressing this resource concern include: Washington Departments of Ecology, Agriculture and Health; Whatcom County, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Environmental Protection Agency, Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe of Indians.

Priority #2 -- Water Quantity: Many of the lowland tributaries suffer from low flows in the summer. There is an increasing concern over the availability of sufficient water to meet the needs of our diverse community. Four new Watershed Improvement Districts were formed in response.

The District will work to: Protect and enhance water quantity for beneficial uses by improving or re-establishing important watershed processes; retrofitting drainage systems with control structures to avoid over-draining the soil profile; and encouraging the widespread adoption of water conservation practices on working farms and ranches.

This is a State and Regional priority see:

- 2012-2013 Action Agenda for Puget Sound (August 2012)
 - Protect and Recover Salmon



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- *Preparing for a Changing Climate: Washington State's Integrated Climate Response Strategy* (April 2012)

Other entities engaged in addressing this resource concern: Whatcom County, City of Bellingham, PUD #1, Washington State Department of Ecology, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Tribe of Indians and the Bertrand, Sumas, Laurel, South Lynden, Drayton and North Lynden Watershed Improvement Districts.

Priority #3 -- Wildlife Habitat: Lowland Whatcom County has been highly modified through clearing, ditching, draining, dredging, tiling, filling and grading in order to make its lands productive for agriculture. The tributaries once produced large populations of salmon and trout. Some species (Spring Chinook, Bull Trout and Steelhead Trout) that use these areas are now threatened with extinction.

The District will work to: Deliver an effective program of voluntary restoration of riparian and wetland areas to advance locally developed plans that recover fish without eroding Whatcom's base of prime farmland.

This is a regional resource priority:

- See Agenda for Puget Sound, The Action Agenda in Whatcom and WRIA 1, August 2012.
 - Protect and restore upland, freshwater, and riparian ecosystems

Other entities engaged in addressing this resource concern: Whatcom County, Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, Whatcom Land Trust, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Tribe of Indians; Bertrand, Sumas, Laurel, South Lynden, Drayton and North Lynden Watershed Improvement Districts.

Priority #4 -- Conserving Whatcom's Green Infrastructure Network: Green Infrastructure is the County's natural life-support system which is composed of working farmlands, ranchlands, forestlands, open spaces, wildlife corridors, and other sensitive natural areas. Just as we must address haphazard development, we must also address haphazard conservation. Conservation activities that are reactive, site-specific, narrowly focused, or not well integrated with other efforts will not, in the end, be successful. Just as we need smart growth to strategically direct and influence the patterns of land development, we need "smart conservation" to strategically direct our County's conservation practices. Green infrastructure provides a solution that ensures environmental protection and a higher quality of life within communities, as well as regulatory predictability for landowners and investors.

The District will work to: Integrate Green Infrastructure planning process into the County's Critical Areas Update, including garnering broad community support for the outcome. Support activities of Watershed Improvement Districts to improve water quality, quantity, habitat and farmland protection.

This is a regional resource priority see:

- 2012-2013 Action Agenda for Puget Sound (August 2012),
 - A1 Focus land development away from ecologically important and sensitive areas
 - A3 Protect and Steward Ecologically Sensitive Rural and Resource Lands

Other entities engaged in addressing this resource concern: Whatcom County, Whatcom Farm Friends, Ag District Coalition, Whatcom Land Trust, ReSources, Futurewise



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Program Areas: *There are four program areas: Water Quality, Water Quantity/Habitat, Community Viability, Sustainability & Resiliency and District Operations.*

Natural Resource Priority Program Area: *LIVESTOCK & WATER QUALITY*

Goal(s): Reduce the contributions of nutrients and bacterial pollution from livestock operations in the Nooksack River and its lowland tributaries; California, Dakota and Terrell Creeks and Sumas River.

Natural Resource Measurable Result Objective: Reduce the contributions of bacterial pollution from livestock operations within target watersheds to TMDL levels or below as measured by Whatcom County.



Programmatic Measurable Result Objectives:

- Deliver technical and financial assistance to commercial farming operations that result in the implementation of best management practices that protect and improve water quality.
- Partner with Whatcom County Planning & Development Services to deliver a program of technical and cost share assistance to non-commercial livestock operations that result in the implementation of best management practices that protect sensitive areas and improve water quality.
- Consult with agencies on policies and regulatory programs that protect the environment, not only to ensure program effectiveness, but also avoid undue or unintended negative impacts to livestock-based industries.

Commercial Livestock Operations

- Provide technical assistance to 60 operations
- Conduct risk assessments for and provide practice recommendations to 30 operations. (Steps 1-5 of farm plan process)
- Develop 10 custom Livestock Nutrient management Plans – (complete farm plan through Board approval.)
- Assist 20 operators to apply for cost-share programs to install needed BMPs.
- Provide 50 engineering designs and specifications.

Non-Commercial Livestock Operations

- Provide technical assistance to 40 operations
 - Conduct risk assessments and provide recommendations to 15 operations
 - Develop standardized conservation plans for 10 non/ small commercial livestock operations and/or crop producers
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- Assist 5 operations to implement their plans

Funding Source(s): Washington Conservation Commission, US Environmental Protection Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Whatcom County, Washington Dept. of Ecology.

LIVESTOCK & WATER QUALITY

Commercial

Provide Technical Assistance	On going	Livestock	23	\$	9,030
Conduct Risk Assessments	On going	Livestock	23	\$	9,726
Develop/Update Custom LNMPs	On going	Livestock	56	\$	23,822
Implement Custom LNMPs	On going	Livestock	34	\$	16,127
Implement Cost-share Program	On going	Livestock	14	\$	5,943
Edge of Field Project	On going	Science	23	\$	9,088
Other Research Projects	On going	Science	104	\$	41,806
TSP - Planning & Design work	On going	Engineering	295	\$	126,260
Program Intern	On going	Intern	56	\$	7,475

Non-Commercial

Provide Technical Assistance	On going	Livestock	110	\$	29,130
Conduct Risk Assessments	On going	Livestock	50	\$	14,356
Develop Standardized LNMPs	On going	Livestock	74	\$	23,250
Implement Standardized LNMPs	On going	Livestock	79	\$	24,789
Implement Cost-share Program	On going	Livestock	32	\$	8,596

General

Professional Training	On going	Livestock			
Manage cooperators databases	On going	Livestock			
Work with Agencies & Stakeholders	On going	As Appointed	104	\$	54,547
TOTALS:			1073	\$	403,945

Natural Resource Priority Program Area: *HABITAT ENHANCEMENT*

Goal(s): To have water of sufficient quantity to meet the needs of current and future generations, specifically including water for agriculture, and healthy and harvestable salmon, steelhead and trout populations.



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Natural Resource Measurable Result Objective:

- Enhance fish habitat while maintaining drainage/flood protection for farm fields.
- Improve hydrological conditions of the lower watersheds.

Programmatic Measurable Result Objectives:

- Provide technical and cost share assistance to
 - Implement water conservation and development practices.
 - Landowners for the installation and maintenance of practices along eligible watercourses and wetlands.
- Implement projects with partner assistance to improve instream fish habitat. Develop and plant 24 CREP projects on 72 acres
- Maintain 129 CREP projects on 505 acres
- Remove 3 fish passage barrier culverts and replace with bridges.
- Develop alternatives for maintaining canopies of riparian forest and hedgerow buffers to prevent encroachment on farmland and impairment of drainage.

Funding Source(s): Natural Resources Conservation Service, Whatcom County, Washington Conservation Commission, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Environmental Protection Agency

Program Activities	Target Dates	Person Responsible	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding
HABITAT ENHANCEMENT				
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program				
Recruit new and re-enroll CREP Projects	Winter/Spring	Riparian	90	\$ 27,321
Develop and Plant CREP Projects	Winter/Spring	Riparian	234	\$ 83,041
Monitor and properly maintain CREP Projects	Summer/Fall	Riparian	464	\$ 128,750
Effectively administer CREP cost-share and maintenance reimbursement program	On going	Riparian	124	\$ 38,644
Program Intern	On going	Intern	56	\$ 7,475
Farms & Flood				
Flood Protection	Spring	Frank	20	\$ 8,179
Barrier Removal	Spring	Frank	2	\$ 909



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Programmatic Measurable Result Objectives:

- Participate in the City of Bellingham’s Green Infrastructure process and recruit support.
- Promote conservation-wise stewardship practices to landowners, students and other public entities through various media (for e.g. bi-annual newsletter, facebook, website...).
- Provide at least 2 project tours for Agency representatives, dignitaries, etc. highlighting District conservation programs, practices to benefit the environment and natural resource-based industries.
- Present at 5 public meetings, conferences, etc. (County Council, Ag Advisory, Shellfish Protection, WWIN, WADE, etc.)
- Recruit, train and support 8 water quality sampling volunteers
- School-based Programing:
 - Provide (4) internships for an introduction to Conservation Districts Programs, Agricultural Best Practices, Social Science of Conservation, AgroEcology and Involvement in Community Based Events to the urban centers
 - Work with (1) WWU Capstone class for project based research on farmland protection and sustainable agriculture
 - Engage 3 high schools and 3 elementary schools in conservation education programming including:
 - Support and train High School aged youth through Envirothon to explore current conservation issues, agricultural BMPs and work force development.
 - Work with elementary teachers and students on water quality and backyard conservation programming
- Recruit and assist with 5-6th grade forest tour. Host 6 workshops on topics of small farm stewardship, water quality BMPs, backyard habitat and low impact development.
- Connect with 2000+ rural and urban dwellers through a plant sale, workshops, tours, fun run and other events (e.g. County Fair, Youth Fair, Wings Over Water, Country Living Expo, Oyster Fest, Flora Fair, Farm Speaker Series, Sustainable Connections, Envirothon, and 5th & 6th grades tour.
- Coordinate with other organizations and agencies on natural resource education efforts
- Task a District staff person(s) with developing recommendations for activities, budgets and sources of funding for establishing Firewise and Forestry programs.
- Task a District staff person(s) with developing recommendations for including soil health into conservation planning considerations.

Funding Source(s): Whatcom County, Washington Conservation Commission, US Environmental Protection Agency, Proceeds of District Native Plant Sale

Program Activities	Target Dates	Person Responsible	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding
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COMMUNITY VIABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCE

WID CRM process participation	On going	Sweeney	12	\$ 5,201
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Publish Whatcom Conservation Newsletters	Bi-annually	All Staff	77	\$	27,412
Publish presentations, flyers, videos, internet content	On going	All Staff	51	\$	19,958
Conduct Annual Native Plant Sale	Feb/Mar	All Staff	64	\$	17,685
Provide support (office, graphics, website & GIS) to partners in sub-basin initiatives	On going	All Staff	35	\$	12,266
Community outreach (workshops and events)	On going	All Staff	72	\$	31,946
Conduct livestock stewardship workshops	On going	Livestock	25	\$	9,141
Conduct tours of projects for agency reps, public, etc.	On going	All Staff	29	\$	13,524
Volunteer Programs	On going	Sweeney	15	\$	7,956
Coordinate Internships and Capstone program Internships	On going	Sweeney	17	\$	8,327
School based programming	On going	Sweeney	36	\$	19,527
Program Intern	On going	Intern	56	\$	7,475
TOTALS:			366	\$	137,134

FOREST PROTECTION

TA-Landowners develop/implement forest plans	On going	Wayne	0	\$	-
TA-Landowners develop/implement Firewise plans	On going	Wayne	2	\$	847
TOTALS:			2	\$	847

District Program Area: District Operations

Goal(s):

- Strengthen partnerships and relationships with NRCS and other agencies and groups.
- Put the District on firm financial footing.
- Maintain the appropriate technical staff to accomplish District goals

District Program Measurable Result Objective:

- *Support the District's Board so they may serve successfully as the grassroots representatives of landowners and general public of Whatcom County by achieving widespread voluntary cooperation in natural resource conservation programs.*
- *Serve as the technical resource for landowners, general public and agencies on conservation matters.*
- *Administer District operations to ensure compliance with its enabling statute RCW 89.08 et seq., as well as the policies and standards established by the Commission or other funding sources.*



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- Capture financial resources to implement Annual and Long Range Plans
- Participate in the County's initiative to develop a comprehensive water resources management funding strategy.
- Maintain the appropriate technical staff to accomplish the District goals.

Funding Source(s): All Grants, Discretionary Funds

Activities for FY 2015	Target Dates	Person/Team Responsible	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding
DISTRICT OPERATIONS				
Recruit/Support District Supervisors and Associates in implementing the District Charge.	On going	Board & Executive Director	5	\$ 2,423
General Technical Assistance to Agencies, Public and Landowners not addressed through other programs.	On going	Board & Executive Director	56	\$ 30,285
Administer Programs/Grants consistent with prescribed management standards	On going	Administrative	196	\$ 74,217
Pursue and obtain funding to implement District Annual and Long Range Plans	On going	Program Leads	11	\$ 6,057
Provide the training, equipment and support to District staff necessary to successfully accomplish their respective program responsibilities	On going	Administrative	9	\$ 3,470
TOTAL:			277	\$ 116,452

FY15 Desired Level of Staffing and Funding: (budget for FY 2016 – 7/1/15 – 6/30/16)

Operations	Full-time Equivalents	Estimated Funding
Livestock & Water Quality	4.77	\$ 403,944.66
Habitat Enhancement	4.76	\$ 325,742.83
Community Viability, Sustainability & Resiliency	1.63	\$ 137,133.65
District Operations	1.23	\$ 116,451.54



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	TOTAL:	\$	12	\$	983,272.68
Overhead (25%)				\$	245,818.17
				<u>\$</u>	<u>1,229,090.85</u>

