



# 5-Year Plan (2015 to 2020) Whitman Conservation District

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## Organization of the Whitman Conservation District

A political subdivision of the State of Washington, the authorities, powers and structure are contained in RCW 89.08.

- The Whitman Conservation District was formed in 1966 through a consolidation of the Central Whitman Soil Conservation District (originally formed in 1945) and the West Whitman Soil Conservation District (originally formed in 1946).
- The District's area is the southwest quarter of Whitman County.
- The District is governed by a Board of Supervisors, three elected by the District's voters and two appointed by the Washington State Conservation Commission.

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## Function of the Whitman Conservation District

To make available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with conservation of soil, water and related natural resources.

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## We Serve & Why

Whitman Conservation District serves all the residents of the District to guarantee the long-term sustainability of the natural resources in a voluntary manner through activities and actions that meet local needs in an economically and socially acceptable manner.

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## Mission of the Whitman Conservation District

The Mission of the Whitman Conservation District is to promote the wise, ethical and sustainable use of natural resources by leadership in the education and assistance of all people in the District. The Whitman Conservation District will promote the implementation of the best available conservation measures and provide a forum for local input on natural resource issues.

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## Vision of the Whitman Conservation District

That Whitman Conservation District will achieve sustainable use of its natural resources while maintaining productive agricultural and natural resource-based industries.

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## Values of the Whitman Conservation District

The District demonstrates its values through:

- support the people of the District through the locally-led process;
- honest and open communication, integrity and professionalism in its leadership and partnerships;
- the development and application of best management practices that protect healthy, viable natural resource systems and promote sustainable use of those systems for future generations;
- encouragement of voluntary cooperation for the implementation of conservation practices which are economically and socially acceptable;

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**Natural Resource Data & Information:** Whitman Conservation District is made up of approximately 424,065 acres of privately owned crop and pasture land. Many of these acres are listed with NRCS for several potential issues. Examples of listed categories and amount of acreage with potential conservation issues are:

### Cropland:

- Sheet, rill and wind erosion - 388,236 acres
- Inefficient irrigation usage - 33,515 acres
- Excessive sediment in streams- 389,385 acres
- Pesticide transport – 1,520 acres

### Other associated agriculture:

- Excessive pathogens – 10,107 acres
- Undesirable plant productivity – 10,001 acres
- Habitat degradation – 322,975 acres
- Pest pressure – 322,700 acres

### Livestock- Pasture:

- Excessive nutrients – 1,170 acres
- Undesirable plant pressure – 32,372 acres

### Rangeland:

- Undesirable plant productivity – 245,340 acres
- Pest pressure – 245,340 acres
- Possibility of habitat degradation – 245,340 acres

Approximately 20,336 acres of contracted CRP is scheduled to expire in the year of 2013, which will open more acres up for more potential issues. In Whitman Conservation District there are approximately 1,699 stream miles with 71 stream miles eligible for CREP.

**Priorities from the 2014 Public Input Session are as follows with the goals to be met by 2018:**

#### ***Water Quality***

1. Participation by livestock operators to have a plan in place addressing water quality concerns and grazing issues.
2. Enhancement of riparian areas along river/stream corridors
3. Alternative winter feeding practices to reduce possibilities of runoff from feeding areas
4. Increase awareness of CREP and CCRP to buffer waterways as alternative practices
5. Reduction of regulatory concerns in the District

#### ***Soil Quality***

1. Producers move from a conventional tillage system to a direct seed/mulch till system
2. Promote Cover crops
3. Shop talks covering cover crops and soil health
4. Increase public perception of the positive aspects of farming on private lands
5. Alternatives to burning stubble

#### ***Livestock***

1. Partner with 5 Star Watershed Stewardship program
2. Collaborate with Whitman County Extension on grazing alternatives
3. Increase public perception of the positive aspects of ranching on private and public land
4. Increase the public awareness to benefits of cohabitation for wildlife and livestock
5. Increase awareness of best management practices by ranchers
6. Reduce regulators concerns in well managed livestock operations

## **Quality of Life**

1. Conservation education programs in schools, fairs, library and local events
  2. Increase job possibilities
  3. Thriving economy
  4. Great place to live, work, play and raise family
  5. Community support & feedback
  6. Participation in district supported programs by young first time producer or returning farm/ranch producer
  7. Increase interest in locally grown produce
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## **Criteria for Selecting Conservation Priorities:**

- Producer driven value and or identified need
  - Urgent / important conservation need
  - Using the natural processes of water, animals, mineral cycles and using sun/wind for energy source
  - Regulatory enforcement forces
  - Economic feasible stability
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## **Priority Natural Resource Conservation Needs & Geographic Areas, Measures of Success and Goals:**

### **Water Quality**

Natural Resource Data:

- See above water quality data

Goal:

- By June 2020 have a demonstrated increase in: participation by livestock and farming operators to have a plan in place addressing water quality issues; riparian areas along streams managed efficiently, runoff from livestock feeding areas eliminated; reduction in erosion and related sedimentation from cropland, increase awareness of CREP and CCRP programs to buffer waterways; reduction of most regulatory concerns in the District.

Measure Success:

- Landowners interested in alternatives to managing riparian areas for undesirable plant species on 10 farms with overall impact on 10,000 acres
- Controlling sediment loading to streams along 10 miles of stream/rivers
- Increase interest in 5 Star Watershed Stewardship program
- Increase participation in monitoring for temperature and turbidity in district streams by 10 landowners
- Educate the public of the different types of pollutants contributed to streams/rivers from urban development by using news media links, websites, face book, etc.
- Decrease regulating agencies interest in District area and increased support of the public for conservation program activities

## **Soil Quality**

Natural Resource Data:

- See above soil quality data

Goal:

- By June 2020 have a demonstrated increase in soil health including: producers transitioning from a conventional tillage system to direct seed/mulch till system; promote cover crops as an alternative to chemical fallow; promoting livestock grazing on cropland acres; facilitating shop talks covering topics relating to cover crops to benefit soil health and weed suppression; increase public perception of the positive aspects of farming on private lands; alternatives to agriculture burning; alternatives for CRP takeout practices

Measure of success:

- Reduction in soil erosion on 10,000 acres
- Increase soil testing by producers to demonstrate improvements in soil health
- 10 producers involved in monitoring programs on sediment movement
- 20 producers participating in an alternative CRP takeout program
- Demonstrate to producers the benefits of planting multispecies cover crops by cost sharing on 100 acres planted to cover crops working with researchers on demonstration areas
- 8 practices implemented to reduce/eliminate use of chemical sprays to control undesirable plants
- Educate the public on the benefits of growing their own food crops by sponsoring workshops, educational programs and shop talks
- Increase public participation in district supported programs
- Promote alternatives to burning residue (grazing, direct seed)

## **Livestock**

Natural Resource Data:

- See above for livestock data

Goals:

- By June 2020 have a demonstrated increase in: Partnering with the 5 Star Watershed Stewardship program; collaborate with Whitman County Extension and Whitman County Cattlemen Association on grazing alternatives; increase public perception of the positive aspects of ranching on private and public land; increase the public awareness to the benefits of cohabitation for wildlife and livestock; increase awareness of best management practices by ranchers; reduce regulators' concerns in well managed livestock operations

Measures of success:

- Increase awareness of 5 Star program with Whitman Conservation District livestock operators
- 20 livestock producers to incorporate different grazing practices to increase production, and manage undesirable plant species in pastures and rangelands.
- Assist 10 producers with water quality monitoring practices
- Partner with Whitman County Extension, Whitman County Cattlemen Association, NRCS/FSA and Washington Fish and Wildlife doing 5 educational workshops on grazing plans and conservation system implementation on CRP and riparian areas
- Development of 10 grazing management plans including incorporating livestock practices with the CRP take out process

- Increase government and public awareness to the benefits of cohabitation of wildlife and livestock using media outlets (websites, Facebook, news media)
- Reduce regulators' concerns on well managed livestock operations

## Quality of Life

Natural Resource Data:

- See above for population data

Goals:

By June 2020 have a demonstrated increase in: agriculture related jobs, agriculture and conservation education programs in schools, fairs, libraries and other local events; thriving economy; great place to live, work, play and raise a family; positive community support & feedback; participation in district supported programs; increase interest in locally grown produce.

Measures of success:

- Present conservation education in schools, fairs, library and local events
- 50 of participants participating in district supported programs
- 100 young participants in conservation work
- Reduction of regulatory interventions both in rural and urban areas
- Increase in participants in growing food crops
- Demonstrated support for agricultural activities, new technology use, and agricultural culture

## District Operations Priorities

Goals: By June 2020 have a demonstrated increase in: high quality employees that are appreciated, happy Board Supervisors, steady Good Governance Tier 1 placement, clean audits & compliances, additional funding through grants, easily accessible office space

Measures of Success

- Employee longevity
- 5 happy Supervisors
- Good Governance Tier 1 placement annually
- In three years have an excellent audit report
- 25% increase in funding through grants
- By the end of June each year have completed effective and efficient operations including accounting, grant vouchering, personnel management, Supervisor elections & appointments, training & development, annual planning and reporting.

## Producer Needs

- Economically viable alternatives
- Unbiased and complete information and alternatives
- Confidence and trust in the district
- Confidentiality
- Simplicity in designing plans
- Positive public support

## Milestones, Timeline & Actions

### Priority: Water Quality

**Measurable Goal:** By June 2020 have a demonstrated increase in; 15% District landowner participation

Milestones	Timeline
There will be 15% participation by landowners to have a conservation plan in place to address water quality issues	By 2020
Use Riparian Area Management TR 1737-15 guide to measure proper functioning conditions of riparian areas	By 2020
Increase awareness of CREP and CCRP program alternatives for waterway buffers to 15% of producers	By 2020
Reduction of most regulators' concerns in District	By 2020

### Priority: Soil Quality

**Measurable Goal:** By June 2020 have a demonstrated increase in direct seed/mulch till systems, awareness/interest in soil health, how to monitor for sediment movement, participation in alternative CRP take out programs, increase in awareness of local community gardens

Milestones	Timeline
10% increase in soil health systems	By June 2020
Work with Researchers in the development of cover crops	By June 2020
10 areas being monitored for sediment movement and undesirable plants	By June 2020
10 producers participating in alternative CRP take out programs	By June 2020

### Priority: Livestock

**Measurable Goal:** By June 2020 have a demonstrated increase in livestock participation in 5 Star Watershed programs, in alternative grazing practices, public awareness of benefits of cohabitation for wildlife and livestock, and reduced regulators concerns in well managed livestock operations

Milestones	Timeline
Potential of 15 producers participating in 5 Star Watershed programs as long as the organization is active.	By June 2020
3 alternative grazing practices to address CRP takeout and undesirable plants	By June 2020
Document positive input concerning wildlife and livestock interactions	By June 2020
Reduction of most regulators' concerns in District	By June 2020

**Priority: Quality of Life**

**Measurable Goal:** By June 2020 have a demonstrated increase in conservation education programs in schools, fairs, libraries, and other local events, increase in agriculture related jobs, positive community support, participation in district programs, and participation in community/backyard gardening

<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
5 conservation education programs in schools, fairs, libraries, etc.	By June 2020
Increase of agriculture related jobs in district	By June 2020
Communities participating in district programs	By June 2020
1 school/community/backyard garden	By June 2020

**Priority: Information – Education & District Operations Priorities**

**Measurable Goal:** By June 2020 have a demonstrated increase in employee longevity, happy Supervisors and associate supervisors, Good Governance Tier 1 placement, an excellent audit report, increase in funding through grants

<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
5 years with same employees and supervisors	By June 2020
Annually Good Governance Tier 1 Placement	By June 2020
Three years have an excellent audit report	By June 2020
50% increase in funding through grants	By June 2020

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**Staffing Needs** (optional)

- Increase the position of Natural Resource Coordinator to full time when funding allows
- Maintain the current contracted services
- Add Information/Education/Outreach/Public Relations position when funding allows

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**Annual Budget Needs** (optional)

• Salaries/Benefits/Taxes	\$42,000.00
• Office/Grant/Program Supplies	14,930.00
• Training/Travel	6,000.00
• Cost-Share Programs	29,000.00
• Rent/Professional Services	20,000.00
• Capital Expense	1,500.00
• Insurance/Dues	<u>7,100.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$120,530.00

**Key Decision Makers** (optional)

Local Land Operators/Owners  
WCD Board of Supervisors  
Agricultural Leaders  
City Councils  
County Commissioners  
Partnering Conservation Districts  
County Extension Agency  
Washington State University  
University of Idaho  
Local Schools  
Community Organizations  
Whitman County Cattleman  
5 Star  
Ducks Unlimited

Washington Conservation Commission  
State Representatives, Senators & Governor  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Department of Agriculture  
Department of Ecology  
Department of Natural Resources  
Farm Service Agency  
County Port District  
US Representatives & Senators  
Salmon Recovery Board  
WAWG, PNDSA, Farm Bureau  
Palouse Land Trust

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