

# Policy and Programs Update

WSCC Regular Meeting – Bremerton, WA  
January 21, 2016

Ron Shultz, WSCC Policy Director



Washington State  
**Conservation Commission**

# Legislative Update

- Session started January 11 – Short 60-day session - Session ends March 10.
- Bills of Interest so far:
  - ▶ HB 2352 - Requiring the protection and restoration of salmon habitat on lands proposed for protection through a WWRP farmland preservation easement – whether the landowner proposed the salmon protection as part of the easement or not. Also requires the use of the NOAA buffer guidance.
  - ▶ HB 2353 (and SB 6171) - Increases civil penalties for knowing attendance by a member of a governing body at a meeting held in violation of the Open Public Meetings Act. Increases penalty from \$100 to \$500. Adds a \$1,000 penalty for subsequent violations. Definitions of “governing body” include CD boards.
  - ▶ HB 2376 (and SB 6246) - Supplemental operating appropriations. Includes \$8.8 million for WSCC for fire recovery activities.
  - ▶ HB 2392 - Adding new reporting requirements and pesticide application limitations.

# Legislative Update

- ▶ HB 2427 (and SB 6315) - Regarding local government modernization. Requires locals to take action: “...each local agency electing to send and accept [records relating to governmental affairs and governmental transactions] shall establish the method that must be used for electronic submissions and electronic signatures.” CDs are included in the definition of “local agency”.
- ▶ HB 2576 - Relating to public records act requests to local agencies. CDs are included in the definition of “local agencies”. Would allow a local agency to adopt a policy limiting the number of hours it devotes on a monthly basis to responding to public records requests. This policy may only be adopted if a number of factors are met by the local agency. The bill does other things not related to CDs.
- ▶ SB 6168 - Removes drainage ditches from the definition of fish and wildlife habitat conservation area for GMA critical areas purposes. Will impact districts in GMA counties and particularly those districts in VSP counties.
- ▶ SB 6287 - Would limit HPA requirement to projects “at or below the ordinary high water line”. Current HPA requirements are not so limited.
- ▶ SB 6347 - Changes definitions in the forest protection RCW relating to “unimproved lands” to include lands “...occupied by shrub-steppe vegetation and forestlands devoted primarily to production of livestock or agricultural commodities for commercial purposes.” Also amends the statute relating to forest fire protection costs and coordination of fire protection and suppression to include “unimproved lands” as defined above.

# Legislative Update

The previous – now existing – direction on decision making for Commission positions on legislation is as follows:

1. Commission staff will review and evaluate legislation as it's introduced. The evaluation will focus on potential impacts (positive or negative) to the Commission itself, the agency, or conservation districts. Commission staff will track the legislation through session.
2. If legislation is introduced that's deemed to have an impact on the Commission or conservation districts, staff will discuss with the executive director the legislation and the issue.
3. The executive director and policy director will determine if the matter is one which needs to be coordinated with WACD, and if the matter is one which needs to be brought to the Commission for input.
4. There may be situations when then legislation is moving quickly and more rapid feedback is needed from the Commission. In these cases (as determined by the executive director) Commission staff will brief the Commission executive committee. The executive director will then discuss possible agency positions with the executive committee.
5. If time permits, a briefing will be made to the full Commission.

# Policy Update

## VSP Update

- Hiring of VSP Program Coordinator
  - VSP Regional Meetings
  - Contracts from counties are arriving
  - Several counties are using CDs as lead
  - Skamania and Franklin
  - First work plan likely Skagit
  - Joint meeting with Statewide Advisory Group and Technical Panel
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# Policy Update

## OFP

- Further discussion on farmland preservation interest and trends.
- Motion

# Policy Update

## Puget Sound RCPP – Precision Conservation for Water Quality and Salmon Recovery

- ▶ WSCC Lead Applicant
- ▶ Co-Managers – AFT, TNC, WSCC, Pacific Shellfish Growers Association, Washington State Dairy Federation
- ▶ Advisory Committee – Puget Sound Natural Resource Alliance: a cross sector coalition of tribes, ag, private sector and conservation groups dedicated to working lands conservation and Puget Sound Recovery

# PS RCPP

Funding (five years):

USDA / NRCS : \$9,000,000

State Match: \$9,000,000

Approach:

- Identification of “action areas” – geographic areas where landowner outreach and activities would be focused to address water quality and salmon.
- Goal is up to 12 action areas.

# Precision Conservation

## Moving beyond 1 size fits all



# PS RCPP

## Overall Approach:

- Identify priority reaches using watershed, reach, and parcel criteria.
  - Survey the extent of land protection and conservation practices in the priority reaches.
  - Identify farmland protection, restoration, and stewardship priorities within the reaches.
  - Reaching out to landowners with customized packages of financial and technical assistance.
  - Implementing projects.
  - Monitoring and reporting on progress.
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# PS RCPP

## Initial Action Areas:

- Thomas Creek (Skagit)
- Newaukum (King)
- Skykomish (Snohomish)

## Early Issues:

- Contracting with the action area entity – CD and NGO
- Complexity of EQIP roll-out between the areas
- Complexity of managing match funding
- Coordination of executive and advisory groups

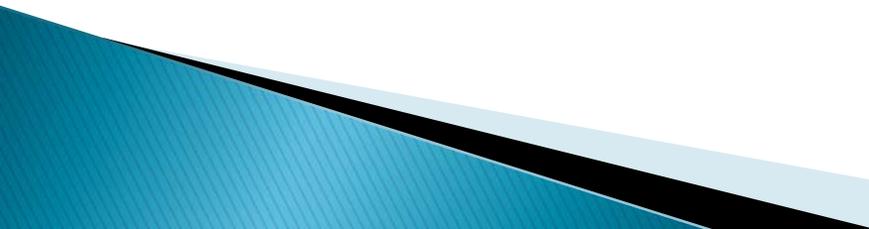
# Other Current RCPPs

Palouse River Watershed Partnership – Includes Farmed SMART Certification program. State match.

Upper Columbia Irrigation Enhancement - Trout Unlimited is the lead. State match.

Yakama Nation On-Reservation Lower Yakima Basin Restoration Project

Colville Reservation Water Quality and Habitat Improvement



# Proposed RCPPs

Kittitas - Upper Yakima Integrated Plan Implementation

Okanogan - Soil Health in the Pacific Northwest

Spokane - Greater Spokane River Watershed  
Implementation

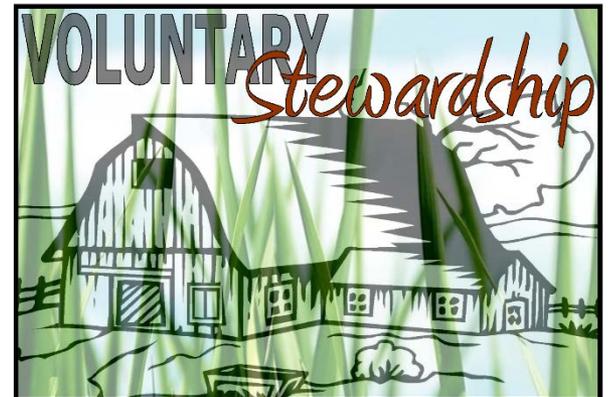
# Policy and Program Overview

## Questions?

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# Dairy Loan Program

Dairy Nutrient Demonstration Low Interest Loans  
\$5,000,000

The appropriation is provided solely for low interest loans for two or more dairy nutrient projects, with at least one located west of the cascades and one east of the cascades.



# Fire Funding

- Governor Supplemental - \$8.8 million
  - Covers fires from this season as well as Carlton
  - Currently responding to legislative staff questions regarding how previous fire funding was spent and the impact of federal funding.
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# Hay Funding

- \$500,000 provided via Ecology from the drought funding.
  - Process developed and implemented by Okanogan CD
  - Emergency Hay Program Committee has committed the full \$500,000 to 55 people awarded vouchers.
  - The first round they distributed 36 vouchers.
  - Round 2 included 19 vouchers to new applicants and 4 vouchers to first round recipients (who received a second voucher).
  - Round 3 was 6 people who received funds in previous rounds.
  - We have only written a few checks because folks are trying to get hay purchased.
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