

STRATEGIC PLAN for 2015 – 2019

Thurston Conservation District

I. MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Thurston Conservation District is:

Thurston Conservation District, a non-regulatory agency, strives to conserve and sustain the beneficial use and protection of local natural resources through partnerships with the County's rural, agricultural, and urban communities, as well as local, state, federal and tribal agencies.

II. VALUES STATEMENT

The values underlying our operations include honesty, candor, integrity, fairness and equity, and inclusiveness. Our intent is that our values are demonstrated in our operations.

1. We advocate and collaborate for working lands activities, at a grass-roots level, using methods that promote sustainable resource management, economic viability, and are based on best available science.
2. We serve as the information hub to translate regulations and best available science to landowners through education and implementation and serve as a conduit for the needs of the community to policy officials.
3. We serve as the information hub for working lands information in Thurston County. We collaborate with entities and individuals to promote this value.
4. We value and honor the public trust and investment in our work and will strive diligently to preserve that partnership.
5. We provide value for public funding via responsive and efficient systems, transparent governance, and clear goals that have measurable benefits to natural resources and communities in Thurston County.

6. We accurately, professionally and with sensitivity serve our diverse community. We value diverse opinions and strive to listen; to meet people where they are, rather than imposing our views upon them.
7. We measure performance based on our annual work plans and adjust our efforts to ensure work is done on high priority items that positively impact natural resources.
8. We strive to be respectful of all community members and their lifestyle choices, with a commitment to provide premier customer service to the public via communication methods suited to individual customers' needs.
9. We encourage innovation in our practices and ideas and will support our staff, volunteers, and community in implementing them. Being in the state capitol, we support innovation by making ourselves available for pilots and demonstration projects of statewide benefit.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL VISION

The Thurston Conservation District conserves and sustains the beneficial use and protection of local natural resources. We achieve this via strategic public and private partnerships within all land uses in our community.

IV. STRATEGIC GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. TO CONSERVE & IMPROVE NATURAL RESOURCES

- a. Preserve and improve working lands/working farms (food production, open space, habitat)
- b. Preserve and improve soils
- c. Preserve and improve water
- d. Preserve and improve air
- e. Protect wildlife
- f. Support agriculture, aquaculture, and forestry
- g. Protect beneficial flora
- h. Support ecological diversity

2. TO SUPPORT WORKING LANDS

- a. Support working farms
- b. Preserve farmland, forestlands, and aquaculture
- c. Hold conservation easements within five years

- d. Support increased production of local food production
- e. Promote adequate water is available for agriculture
- f. Identify and maintain existing surface water drainage systems
- g. Support economic viability of farms, forestlands, and aquaculture
- h. Support local agricultural, aquaculture, and forest economies

3. TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

- a. Help develop infrastructure for producing, processing, transporting and distributing local foods
- b. Help local food producers expand their markets, reach, consumers, and manage operations
- c. Support personal/household food production

4. TO HELP OUR COMMUNITY PREPARE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

- a. Help build relationships and encourage communications between the public and private sectors so that they can work together effectively to respond to climate change.
- b. Help educate the public about how they can prepare for climate change impacts.
- c. Implement technical projects & conservation practices to proactively mitigate for climate change impacts (alternative crop production, livestock & equipment flooding pads, etc.)

5. TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF THE COMMUNITY

- a. Protect the tax base
- b. Increase economic health
- c. Support economic diversity

6. TO SUPPORT TRANSPORTATION

- a. Assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors
- b. Support the redevelopment of infrastructure necessary to transport agricultural products

7. TO PREVENT FLOODING AND SEDIMENT DAMAGE

- a. Identify and maintain existing drainage systems in Thurston County
- b. Prevent soil erosion
- c. Address the “silting up” of lakes, waterways and embayments
- d. Protect harbors and marinas from sedimentation

8. TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC

- a. Undertake programs that inform the public about the Thurston Conservation District, its goals, and how it meets them

- b. Support school programs that teach good conservation practice
- c. Support other programs that educate the public about good conservation practices.

9. TO PROMOTE THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE OF THE PUBLIC

10. TO PROVIDE GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

11. TO NETWORK WITH OTHER ENTITIES FOR THE PURPOSE OF MEETING THESE GOALS

- a. Work with other conservation districts and the Washington Association of Conservation Districts
- b. Work with other state, local, tribal, and federal agencies
- c. Work with private organizations

12. STUDY & POSSIBLE ACQUISITION OF PERMANENT HOME FOR THURSTON CONSERVATION DISTRICT

V. DEFINITIONS

- **"Conservation"**. The term includes conservation, development, improvement, maintenance, preservation, protection and use, and alleviation of floodwater and sediment damages, and the disposal of excess surface waters. (RCW 89.08.020)
- **"Conservation of Natural Resources"**. The wise use of the earth's resources by humanity. In order to be sustainable, all conservation efforts must address both the environmental and economic health needs of a community and then achieve a workable balance between the two.

(Note: The term *conservation* came into use in the late 19th cent. and referred to the management, mainly for economic reasons, of such valuable natural resources as timber, fish, game, topsoil, pastureland, and minerals, and also to the preservation of forests (see forestry), wildlife (see wildlife refuge), parkland, wilderness, and watershed areas. In recent years the science of ecology has clarified the workings of the biosphere; i.e., the complex interrelationships among humans, other animals, plants, and the physical environment. At the same time burgeoning population and industry and the ensuing pollution have demonstrated how easily delicately balanced ecological relationships can be disrupted (see air pollution; water pollution; solid waste). Conservation of natural resources is now usually embraced in the broader conception of conserving the earth itself by protecting its capacity for self-renewal. Particularly complex are the problems of nonrenewable resources such as oil and coal (see energy, sources of) and other minerals in great demand. Current thinking also favors the protection of entire ecological regions by the creation of "biosphere reserves."

(Note: Conservation became part of U.S. government policy with the creation (1871) of a U.S. commissioner of fish and fisheries. The Forestry Bureau of the Dept. of Agriculture created the first national forest reserve in 1891. The Irrigation Division in the U.S. Geological Survey developed into the Bureau of Reclamation. The Geological Survey has cataloged and classified the resources of the public domain. In 1906 an act protected the Alaskan fisheries. Conservation as part of a total approach to the use of natural resources was first introduced by President Theodore Roosevelt and his chief forester, Gifford Pinchot. In 1907 President Roosevelt appointed the Inland Waterways Commission, which emphasized the connection between forests, water supply, and stream flow. In 1909 he appointed the

National Conservation Commission, which published the first inventory of the country's natural resources. Roosevelt in 1907 began withdrawing large areas of western public land from sale and settlement so that their resources might be investigated, and setting apart forest reserves, following the example of President Cleveland. Approximately one fourth of all timberland is held by the government. The National Park Service was created in 1916 to preserve landscapes of important aesthetic value. In the 1930s the erosion of much arable land in the Midwest underscored the need for land reclamation and for conservation in general. The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 provided for conservation. The Civilian Conservation Corps, founded in 1933 to relieve unemployment, furnished the personnel for many conservation projects. The Tennessee Valley Authority, set up in 1933, was an outstanding attempt to apply principles of conservation, soil reclamation, and electrification to an entire area, although some critics claim that the extensive river damming and similar New Deal legislation did not, on the whole, have a positive effect on the environment. By 1960 the Soil Conservation Service, established in 1935, covered 95% of all farms and ranches in the United States. By the same year, under the Conservation Reserve Program, some 28 million acres of cropland had been returned to grass and forest cover. Throughout the 1950s attention was focused on the problem of conservation of water resources, particularly in the Southwest. In the 1960s pollution problems came to the fore in all industrialized countries. In the United States numerous laws were passed to protect the environment and its resources.)

<http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/science/conservation-natural-resources.html>

- **Sustainable Agriculture.** The term "sustainable agriculture" ([U.S. Code Title 7, Section 3103](#)) means an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will over the long-term:
 - Satisfy human food and fiber needs; and,
 - Enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agriculture economy depends; and,
 - Make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls; and,
 - Sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and,
 - Enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.

(Note: This definition is taken from USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/ag_systems/in_focus/sustain_ag_if_legal.html)