

Call for feedback: This sheet summarizes one of five policy initiatives under review by the SCC Board of Commissioners. A comment period is open until November 9, 2017. No decisions will be made about initiatives until comments are considered.



October 2017

2017 Policy Initiative:

Long-Term Sustainable Funding

This initiative explores options for conservation districts (CDs) and the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) to achieve a shared priority — to secure sustainable funding that enables us to meet demands for voluntary conservation services and further improve natural resource conditions.

WHY IS THIS NEEDED?

Demand for voluntary conservation services is rising, while capacity to provide those services is in decline.

Funding for SCC and CD operations has decreased or remained static over several biennia. Funding for natural resource agencies hovers at around one percent of state operating funds. It's likely this situation will continue.

This impedes our statutory duty to provide voluntary services to all areas where there's a pressing need for conservation (RCW 89.08.010).

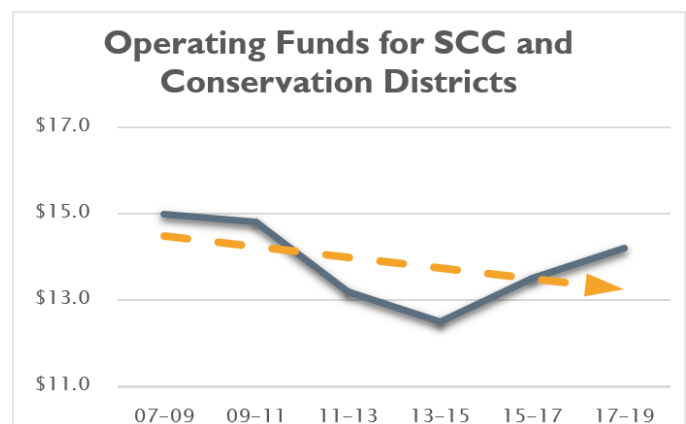
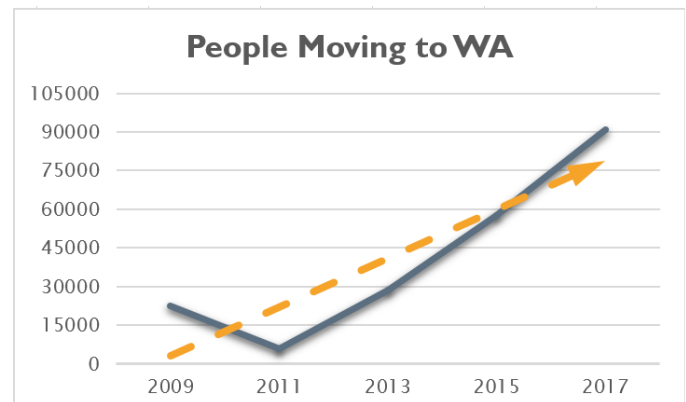
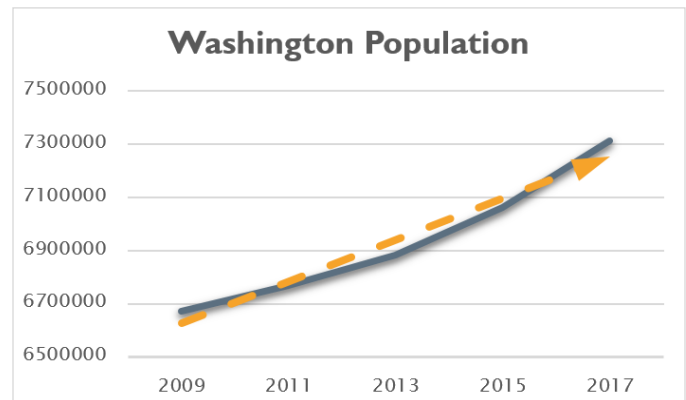
The demand to serve and engage our primary clients — private landowners — is increasing:

- Around 50 percent of land in Washington is privately owned.
- As population grows, so does our client base.
- The main driver of population growth is from people moving to Washington. Many new landowners need education and assistance with best practices for land management and with understanding state natural resource laws.

At the same time, there's increased urgency to accelerate progress on salmon recovery, climate resilience, sustainable farming, and other priorities.

We've demonstrated measureable improvements when several landowners participate in voluntary conservation within a watershed.

With increased funding consistent with increased demand, we'd have capacity to deliver more results for pressing resource issues across the state.



PROPOSALS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Conservation districts and the SCC will identify and adopt a fund source that provides sufficient capacity to meet current and future natural resource needs.

Options for long-term funding have been discussed at all-CD and SCC Board of Commission meetings, including:

- a. Increase authority for CDs to raise rates-and-charges level (remove current cap)
- b. Dedicate percentage of state sales tax
- c. Statewide property tax levied at a percentage of assessed value

For options b and c, conservation districts and the SCC would receive a percentage of funds generated statewide.

When evaluating these options, the goal is to find an option that will:

- Benefit all conservation districts and the SCC.
- Be an increase over existing funding levels.
- Be capable of garnering broad stakeholder support.
- Take into consideration an increase of funds for programs relied upon by conservation districts, landowners, and the SCC.

FAQS

Why new revenue?

We're all required to pay various taxes and fees. If we have to pay, why not make sure a portion of it goes to something we care about?

Generating revenue for voluntary conservation helps us regain some control of our money by making sure Washington's approach to natural resource conservation enables every landowner access to voluntary, locally led solutions.

The value of voluntary conservation work warrants new revenue.

If we select a proposal that includes new revenue, why not allocate 100 percent of the funds to conservation districts and the SCC?

That would require conservation districts and the SCC to move the proposal through the legislative process alone. A proposal of this size will require support from several partners.

Developing a proposal that funds us and other conservation, land use, and agricultural unmet needs will help us build a coalition of support.

WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU AND YOUR STAKEHOLDERS!

The SCC Board of Commissioners would like comments about this initiative from CDs and partners. **Please talk with your local stakeholders about this proposal, and send us your feedback by COB on November 9, 2017 using the feedback form on our website: scc.wa.gov/2017initiatives.**

Here are some questions to consider:

- Do you agree that there's an unmet need for voluntary conservation programs and services?
- What do you think about the value of services and work provided by conservation districts?
- What's the best way to fund voluntary programs and services?