



## **5-Year Plan (2015 to 2019)**

### **Columbia Conservation District**

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### **Organization of the Columbia Conservation District**

- Established June 29, 1949 as a political subdivision of the State of Washington with authorities and structure outlined in Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 89.08.

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### **Function of the Columbia Conservation District**

- To take 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**

- The people who own, manage, or utilize the natural resources.

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### **Mission of the Columbia Conservation District**

- “Mission of Columbia Conservation District is to provide the needed support to people who own, manage, or utilize the natural resources so their activities will enhance the region’s natural resources while ensuring the quality of life & culture these resources provide.”

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### **Vision of the Columbia Conservation District**

- Columbia County residents will be enabled to implement stewardship of our natural resources through voluntary practices without compromise to economic viability or social standards of the region.

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### **Values of the Columbia Conservation District**

- 1) To promote economically feasible conservation practices in Columbia County that insure minimum soil erosion and acceptable air and water quality to meet the needs of agriculture and other consumers, while protecting the future for our youth.
- 2) To protect private property rights.
- 3) An entity that supports and protects the land manager.
- 4) To promote continued voluntary participation of landowners and operators as cooperators in this Conservation District. Each operator is encouraged to develop a viable and effective resource management plan.
- 5) To monitor proposed land conversion from agricultural purposes in order to insure compliance with the intent of the Columbia County Comprehensive plan.
- 6) To operate and supervise Columbia County conservation efforts in a way that emphasizes local control and avoids over-regulation of state or federal agencies.
- 7) To explore funding sources to provide sufficient annual income to offset current and anticipated future expenditures.

## Natural Resource Data & Information:

- The District encompasses all of Columbia County. Of the 558,701 acres: 346,789 acres are managed by private landowners/operators; 210,682 are public lands (USFS, BPA, CTUIR, WDFW & WDNR); and 1,230 acres are within communities.

### Trends

- Soil and water quality issues are more numerous than programs available to help address them
- Producers slow to exchange soil tillage practices for the privilege of using field burning
- Some producers are exchanging field burning for straw removal and/or mechanical straw management
- Direct seed helping to reduce tillage
- Recognize an increase in non-inversion tillage
- Economics uncertainty slows conversion to conservation management practices
- Cost of production and crop insurances impacting cropping decisions and conservation practice application
- Government payments are necessary as part of the rural economy
- Conservation payments can increase – example CSP
- Practices with public benefit needing cost share from public – more consistency needed in the system – should not be a make-money scheme
- Watershed planning goals have been developed with landowner, producer and citizen involvement – acceptance of upland planning in four watershed plans with specifics in each watershed
- Multiple – regional scale projects and planning efforts – our county is split between two WRIAs – regional salmon recovery efforts – moved from our district boundaries to regional boundaries
- Salmon recovery is a driving force – fish related funding sources
- Enhancing of fish habitat
- Go between land managers and regulatory agencies
- Regulatory burdens and changes increased
- Cultural resources is a monster – no streamlined approach – just now finding our way through the process
- Relationship between district board, WACD Committees, WSCC regarding policy development
- Local Work Group process improving – working through our tensions, priorities, identify resource priorities and issues and a mechanism to address
- Use land owners and/or land managers as terminology for our clients
- New technology impacting residue management
- Increasing renewable energies
- Growth of the district programs

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## Criteria for Selecting Conservation Priorities:

- Address's an identified resource concern and/or trend
  - Address's a public identified resource concern(s)
  - Works to sustain Columbia County's agriculture based economy
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## Priority Natural Resource Conservation Needs & Geographic Areas, Measures of Success and Goals:

### **Soil Quality & Conservation** (nutrient management, organic matter, microbial health, infiltration, erosion control)

Goal: By February 2018 increase acres with improved; soil nutrient management balance (nutrient indicator levels, ph, soil quality (organic matter, infiltration, and biological activity), soil and water retention (minimal visible erosion) and implementation of conservation systems.

Measure:

- acres with improved soil quality (organic matter, infiltration, biological activity, nutrient balance, ph)
- reduction in visible erosion (annual & timing of field review)
- acres in conservation systems

Geographic Area: Active agriculture crop acreage

### **Water Quality & Quantity** (confined animals, nutrient levels, TMDLs, practices application, residue management)

Goal: By February 2018 have a demonstrated reduction in Ecology referrals, an increase in number of practices implemented, an increase in number of land managers served, and improvements in water quality & flow.

Measure:

- reduction in Ecology referrals
- number of practices implemented
- number of land managers served
- water quality & flow improvements

Geographic Area: Active agriculture management acreage

### **Wildlife Impacts on Production Agriculture** (crop damage, livestock predation, water availability, ESA recovery impacts)

Goal: By February 2018 have an increase in habitat recovery while recognizing a decrease in dollars lost from wildlife impacts and acreage lost from production agriculture.

Measure:

- Dollars lost from wildlife impacts
- Acres of habitat protected and enhanced
- Acreage lost from production agriculture

Geographic Area: County

### **Air Quality** (reduced emissions, PM 2.5 levels, dust)

Goal: By February 2018 increase utilization of minimum tillage management practices while managing field burning.

Measure:

- number of practices implemented
- number of land managers served
- reduction in acres burned

Geographic Area: Active agriculture crop acreage

### **Forest, Range, and Fire Management** (invasive species, noxious weeds, fuel reduction, CWPP, CRM)

Goal: By February 2018 have a demonstrated increase in number of practices implemented, the number of land managers served and a reduction in acres burned.

Measure:

- acres of forest, range implementing fire management practices
- acres of forest and range implementing practices to reduce invasive species and noxious weeds forest, range and/or fuel reduction plans developed
- number of land managers served

Geographic Area: County

**Renewable Energy & Biomass Alternatives** (biodiesel, ethanol, solar, wind, straw & forest products)

Goal: By February 2018 seek programs to assist landowners/producers in the utilization of natural resources for alternative energy production and efficiencies.

Measure:

- number of landowner/managers served
- number of programs reviewed for potential implementation

Geographic Area: County

**Information – Education & District Operations Priorities, Measures of Success, and Goals:**

**Leadership to New Generation Conservation** (education, outreach, visionary, on-ground conservation implementation & demonstration)

Goal: By February 2018 increase in the numbers of producers practicing conservation on the ground (plans & implementation) and in the number of people/public actively involved with the conservation district.

Measure:

- numbers of producers practicing conservation on the ground (plans & implementation)
- numbers of people/public actively working with the conservation district
- Neighborhood meetings
- Tours, demonstrations, annual grower meeting
- Youth education: soil stewardship, salmon in the classroom & Camp Wooten
- Fair booth

**District Operations & Cost Share**

Goal: By February 2018 ensure effective and efficient operations and steady increase in cost share for on ground conservation work, the number of people served and the number of conservation practices implemented.

Measure:

- Dollars for on ground conservation work
- Number of people served
- Number of conservation practices implemented
- District operations operated effectively and efficiently
- Grant administrative requirements performed effectively and on time
- Commission operational requests/requirements met on time
- Staff maintain professional skill levels through training

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**Land Manager Needs**

- Technical and cost share assistance to implement natural resource management systems (production Ag, small acreage owners, water conveyance).
  - Maintain viability of the family farm to remain in business.
  - The District to buffer regulatory impacts and requirements.
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## Milestones, Timeline & Actions

### Soil Quality & Conservation (nutrient management, organic matter, microbial health, infiltration, erosion control)

**Measurable Goal:**

By February 2018 increase acres with improved; soil nutrient management balance (nutrient indicator levels, ph, soil quality (organic matter, infiltration, and biological activity), soil and water retention (minimal visible erosion) and implementation of conservation systems.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Establish soil nutrient and ph baselines levels (done – now in continuation phase)	Start by March 2013 & continue annually	Conduct site samplings; present at annual conservation district grower
Implement demonstration on the ground management treatments (done)	2015	Cost share implement site specific demonstrations practices
Reemphasize/educate producers on the economy and conservation of minimum tillage systems	Annually	Establish a burn & till mandatory education workshop
Number of Practices implementation	Annually	Seek cost share funding
Assist producers to obtain conservation tillage implements/machinery	Annually	Utilize inter-district agreement with SCD for state revolving fund loans

### Water Quality & Quantity (confined animals, nutrient levels, TMDLs, water management)

**Measurable Goal:**

By February 2018 have a demonstrated reduction in Ecology referrals, an increase in number of practices implemented, an increase in number of land managers served, and improvements in water quality & flow.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Reduction in Ecology referrals	Annually	Provide technical assistance and/or cost share to referrals.
Landowners served	Annually	Numbers of technical assistance and/or cost share contracts developed & implemented Annual meeting and tour – cooperator participation
Number of Practice implementation	Annually	Seek cost share funding
Water quality and flow improvements	February 2013 and 2015	TMDL classifications by Ecology Amount of water placed in “trust” Practice implementation addressing TMDL implementation plan

### Wildlife Habitat and Impacts on Production Agriculture (crop damage, livestock predation, water availability, ESA recovery impacts)

**Measurable Goal:**

By February 2018 have an increase in habitat recovery while recognizing a decrease in dollars lost from wildlife impacts and acreage lost from production agriculture.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Improve wildlife habitat	February 2018	Implement habitat projects without taking away from production acres
Number of Practice implementation	Annually	Seek cost share funding
Work with state fish and wildlife	Annually	Control activities
Encourage funding for losses in state and federal budgets	Annually	Work with state and federal agencies to compensate producers for losses
Opening up lands for needed or desired control	Annually	Work with cooperators on opening up lands

**Air Quality** (reduced emissions, PM 2.5 levels, dust)**Measurable Goal:**

By February 2018 increase utilization of minimum tillage management practices while managing field burning.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Reemphasize/educate producers on the economy and conservation of minimum tillage systems	Annually	Present burn & till education at annual growers day
10% reduction in acres burned (done)	February 2015	Find out if the past 2 years are helping to start producers realize less burning
Assist producers to obtain conservation tillage implements/machinery	Annually	Utilize inter-district agreement with SCD for state revolving fund loans

**Forest, Range, and Fire Management** (invasive species, noxious weeds, fuel reduction, CWPP, CRM)**Measurable Goal:**

By February 2018 have a demonstrated increase in number of practices implemented, the number of land managers served and a reduction in acres with high fire risk.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Fire reduction management plans on range and forest acreage	Annually	Provide technical assistance to landowners
Producer education	Annually	Partner with federal & state agencies to offer educational activities (tours, field days)
Find funding	2018	Find cost share programs to implement plans

**Renewable Energy & Biomass Alternatives** (biodiesel, ethanol, solar, wind, straw & forest products)**Measurable Goal:**

By February 2018 seek programs to assist landowners/producers in the utilization of natural resources for alternative energy production and efficiencies.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Assist landowners to develop alternative natural resource base energy sources	annually	Disseminate information
Monitor programs adaptable to local conditions	annually	Review potential funding
Seek potential project implementation funding	2018	Pursue funding

**Leadership to New Generation Conservation** (education, outreach, visionary, on-ground conservation implementation & demonstration)**Measurable Goal:**

By February 2018 increase in the numbers of producers practicing conservation on the ground (plans & implementation) and in the number of people/public actively involved with the conservation district.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Increase number of producers applying conservation tillage systems	2018	Conduct annual grower workshop, practice tours and demonstration projects.
Increase public awareness of current agriculture practice	annually	Fair booth, presentations
Increase youth understanding of natural resources	annually	Soil stewardship, salmon in the classroom & 6 <sup>th</sup> grade camp
Increase the number of people involved with district programs	2018	Conduct education/outreach activities soliciting public involvement

## District Operations & Cost Share

### Measurable Goal:

By February 2018 ensure effective and efficient operations and steady increase in cost share for on ground conservation work, the number of people served and the number of conservation practices implemented.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Increase funding for on-the-ground project implementation	2016	Seek funding source to implement natural resource priorities
Project implemented	annually	Efficiently manage project implementation
Effective and efficient management	Annually	Operate district professionally to meet Commission administrative and legal requirements
Grant Administration	Annually	Manage grant implementation efficiently, within budget and on time.
Proficient and trained staff	Annually	Ensure staff continually improves skills to affect productive district operations and project management

## Staffing Needs

- *Enter a summary of the staff positions needed to carry out the plan of the Columbia Conservation District based on the above information.*
- District Manager
- Fiscal Manager/Administrative Assistant
- Project Manager/District Assistant
- Cluster Engineer (part-time)
- Planner/Project Manager (new)
- [Technical Consultant \(contract basis\)](#)
- [Biological Consultant \(contract basis\)](#)
- [Engineering \(contract basis\)](#).

## Annual Budget Needs

- *Enter a summary of the annual budget needed to carry out the plan of the Columbia Conservation District based on the above information.*
- *Salary & Benefits* \$ 220,000
- *Contract Services* \$ 52,000
- *Equipment* \$ 6,200
- *Office Supplies* \$ 3,200
- *Materials* \$ 2,900
- *Programs & Cost Share* \$1,400,000
- *Rent & Utilities & Communication* \$ 15,800
- *Transportation* \$ 7,595
- *Training* \$ 4,050
- *Other (WACD & NACD dues)* \$ 5,300
- ***Total Annual Budget Need* \$1,717,045**

### Key Decision Makers

- *Enter a summary of the key decision makers needed to carry out the plan of the Columbia Conservation District based on the above information.*
- 16<sup>th</sup> District elected officials
- Members of Congress and Staff
- WSCC
- WACD
- Secretary of Agriculture
- BPA
- Cooperating Agencies – local, state, federal
- Land Managers/Owners
- NW Planning Council
- County Commissioners

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

