



# FY 2018 (7/1/17 – 6/30/18) Annual Work Plan Whatcom Conservation District (Adopted June 8, 2017)

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## **Mission**

*“The Whatcom Conservation District assists land managers with their conservation choices.”*

## **Vision**

- *“Whatcom County shall have healthy soils, water, and air while maintaining sustainable, profitable and productive agriculture, fisheries, and other natural resource-based industries.*
- *The District shall be acknowledged as the independent and trusted agency of choice for leadership in the conservation, protection, and stewardship of natural resources.”*

## **Natural Resource Priorities**

**Priority #1 -- Water Quality:** Water quality over the Portage Bay shellfish harvest area continued to decline in FY 2017. An additional 300 acres moved from “Approved” to “Conditionally Approved” due to high fecal coliform bacteria levels in marine waters. This raised the total of seasonally closed acres to 800. There was some good news for Drayton Harbor. About half of the shellfish harvest area that for over two decades had been closed to harvest (810 acres) was upgraded to “Approved”. This was attributed to County and District efforts through the Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) program. A portion of Birch Bay remained closed to the recreational harvest of shellfish. Lower Whatcom County has an estimated 250,000 acres of Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARAs). These are vulnerable to contamination given our high rainfall. Providing nutrient management plans and helping to adaptively management nutrient applications through interpretation of soil tests helps protect these sources of potable water.

*The District will:*

- Assist livestock operators to properly capture, store, and apply the manure generated by their animals.
- Provide guidance to berry and crop farmers in the proper utilization of manure.
- Participate in Whatcom Clean Water Program, Whatcom County PIC Program,
- Providing technical assistance to the Portage Bay and Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection Districts and WIDs.

*This is a regional resource priority see:*

- PS Action 2016 Agenda
  - Ecosystem Strategy 11 Prevent, reduce, and control agricultural runoff
  - Shellfish Strategic Initiative, Sub-strategy 11.1 Target voluntary and incentive-based programs that help working farms contribute to Puget Sound recovery & Sub-strategy 19.1 Improve water quality to prevent downgrade and achieve upgrades of important current tribal, commercial, and recreational shellfish harvesting areas.

*Other entities engaged in addressing this resource concern include:* Washington Departments of Ecology, Agriculture and Health, Whatcom County, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Environmental Protection Agency, Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe of Indians.

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**Priority #2 -- Conserving Whatcom County Working Lands (farms & forestry):** Green Infrastructure is the County's natural life-support system that is composed of working farmlands, ranchlands, forestlands, open spaces, wildlife corridors, and other sensitive natural areas. Just as we must address haphazard development, we must also address haphazard conservation. Conservation activities that are reactive, site-specific, narrowly focused, or not well integrated with other efforts will not, in the end, be successful. Just as we need smart growth to strategically direct and influence the patterns of land development, we need "smart conservation" to strategically direct our County's conservation practices. Green infrastructure provides a solution that ensures environmental protection and a higher quality of life within communities, as well as regulatory predictability for landowners and investors.

*The District will work to:*

- Build confidence in the agricultural community that there will be land and water for them now and into the future.
- Support the County's creation and implementation of effective programs for the purchase or transfer of development rights within the boundaries of Whatcom County.
- Advocate to maintain a farm plan alternative to standard buffers in the County's Critical Areas Ordinance.
- Advocate for the County to develop and integrate a landscape plan into its land use plans with the objectives of protecting working lands, maintaining ecological function and habitat connectivity, and creating opportunities for farmers and landowners to sell environmental services.

*This is a regional resource priority see:*

- PS Action Agenda, Ecosystem Strategy 3.2 Retain economically viable working forests and farms

*Other entities engaged in addressing this resource concern:* Whatcom County, Whatcom Farm Friends, Ag District Coalition, Whatcom Land Trust,

**Priority #3 – Fish & Wildlife Habitat:** Lowland Whatcom County has been highly modified through clearing, ditching, draining, dredging, tiling, filling and grading in order to make its lands productive for agriculture. The tributaries once produced large populations of salmon and trout. Fish passage blockages, lack of functioning riparian zones and channel complexity are common limiting factors. At the same time, farmers need drainage in order to farm productively.

*The District will:*

- Deliver an effective program of voluntary restoration of riparian and wetland areas to advance locally developed plans that recover fish without eroding Whatcom's base of prime farmland; and
- Work with Whatcom County, Cities, Special Districts, Tribes, and other stakeholders to restore natural ecosystem processes while ensuring that needs of agriculture are also met.

*This is a regional resource priority:*

- PS 2016 Action Agenda, Strategy 2.2, Implement and maintain priority freshwater and terrestrial restoration projects

*Other entities engaged in addressing this resource concern:* Whatcom County, Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, Whatcom Land Trust.

**Priority #4 -- Water Quantity:** There is growing concern that there is too little water in the lower tributaries to the Nooksack River, Dakota, California and Terrell Creeks to meet the needs of our diverse community. Too much water is also a problem seasonally.

*The District will:*

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- Assist Drainage and Watershed Improvement Districts and landowners in developing and implementing maintenance plans that provide drainage for crops yet accommodate the needs of fish.
- Encourage the widespread adoption of water conservation practices.
- Re-establish important watershed processes through the construction, enhancement, and/or protection of wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, riparian areas, and floodplain areas.
- Work with homeowners and businesses to adopt low impact development practices.
- Support the completion of water quantity studies to eliminate the uncertainty around what is actually available for beneficial use.

*This is a State and Regional priority see:*

- PS Action Agenda Strategy 7 Protect and conserve freshwater resources to increase and sustain water availability for instream flows
- *Preparing for a Changing Climate: Washington State's Integrated Climate Response Strategy* (April 2012)

*Other entities engaged in addressing this resource concern:* Whatcom County, City of Bellingham, PUD #1, Washington State Department of Ecology, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Tribe of Indians.

**Program Areas:** *There are four program areas: Water Quality, Water Quantity/Habitat, Community Viability, Sustainability & Resiliency and District Operations.*

<b>WATER QUALITY</b>	<b>Target Dates</b>	<b>Team/Person Responsible</b>	<b>Time (Days) Required</b>	<b>Estimated Funding</b>
<b>Commercial Livestock Operations</b>				
Provide Technical Assistance	On going	Livestock	72	\$ 28,586
Conduct Risk Assessments	On going	Livestock	124	\$ 42,050
Develop/Update Custom Conservation Plans	On going	Livestock	106	\$ 37,212
Implement Custom Conservation Plans	On going	Livestock	45	\$ 16,123
<b>Non-Commercial</b>				
Provide Technical Assistance	On going	Livestock	151	\$ 47,867
Conduct Risk Assessments	On going	Livestock	77	\$ 23,931
Develop Standard Farm Conservation Plans	On going	Livestock	56	\$ 17,064
Implement Standard Farm Conservation Plans	On going	Livestock	52	\$ 15,753
Cooperator Follow-up and Assessment	On going	Livestock	23	\$ 6,736



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Engineering	Target Dates	Team/Person Responsible	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding
NRCS Programs Implementation	On going	Engineering	155	\$ 80,371
Structural Practice Planning & Implementation	On going	Engineering	176	\$ 71,385
Advanced Waste Treatment Practices (RCPP)	On going	Engineering	23	\$ 13,127
<b>Research &amp; Conservation Practice Effectiveness Monitoring</b>				
Edge of Field Program	On going	Research	149	\$ 53,016
ZAP's Project	On going	Research	77	\$ 26,164
Water Quality Data Coordination	On going	Research	209	\$ 63,453
Discovery Farms Program	On going	Research	34	\$ 12,722
Coordination of research, monitoring, and modeling projects and activities	On going	Research	45	\$ 17,906
NWQI - Ten Mile	Summer/Fall	Research	45	\$ 18,171
CIG -Manure Spreading Advisory	On going	Research	29	\$ 13,151
<b>General</b>				
Manage databases	On going	Livestock	7	\$ 2,372
Work with Agencies & Stakeholders	On going	All	32	\$ 13,637
Coordinate Lake Whatcom HIP Program	On going	Education & Habitat	227	\$ 75,861
Implement Cost-share Program	On going	Livestock & Engineering	9	\$ 3,149
Non-livestock Conservation Practice Planning and Implementation	On going	Livestock & Engineering	95	\$ 54,444
<b>TOTALS:</b>			<b>2014</b>	<b>\$ 754,251</b>

**Goal(s):** Reduce the contributions of nutrients and bacterial pollution from livestock operations in the Nooksack River and its lowland tributaries; California, Dakota and Terrell Creeks and Sumas River.

**Natural Resource Measurable Result Objective:** Reduce the contributions of bacterial pollution from livestock operations within target watersheds to TMDL levels or below as measured by Whatcom County.

**Programmatic Measurable Result Objectives:**

- Deliver technical and financial assistance to commercial farming operations that result in the implementation of best management practices that protect and improve water quality.



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## Whatcom Conservation District (Adopted June 8, 2017)

- Partner with Whatcom County Planning & Development Services to deliver a program of technical and cost share assistance to non-commercial livestock operations that result in the implementation of best management practices that protect sensitive areas and improve water quality.
- Consult with agencies on policies and regulatory programs that protect the environment, not only to ensure program effectiveness, but also avoid undue or unintended negative impacts to livestock-based industries.

### Commercial Livestock Operations

- Provide technical assistance to 60 operations
- Conduct risk assessments for and provide practice recommendations to 30 operations. ( Steps 1-5 of farm plan process)
- Develop 10 custom Livestock Nutrient management Plans – (complete farm plan through Board approval.)
- Assist 20 operators to apply for cost-share programs to install needed BMPs.
- Provide 50 engineering designs and specifications.

### Non-Commercial Livestock Operations

- Provide technical assistance to 40 operations
- Conduct risk assessments and provide recommendations to 15 operations
- Develop standardized conservation plans for 10 non/ small commercial livestock operations and/or crop producers
- Assist 5 operations to implement their plans

**Funding Source(s):** Washington Conservation Commission, US Environmental Protection Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Whatcom County, Washington Dept. of Ecology.

## WATER QUANTITY & HABITAT ENHANCEMENT

### Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

Plan and contract new projects and cooperators	Winter/Spring	Habitat	209	\$	86,691
Plan and contract re-enrollments	Winter/Spring	Habitat	94	\$	31,069
Develop and implement project	Winter/Spring	Habitat	198	\$	80,844
Monitor and maintain projects	Summer/Fall	Habitat	135	\$	43,534
Effectively administer CREP cost-share and maintenance reimbursement program	On going	Habitat	29	\$	18,189

### NRCS Funded Habitat Projects

Fish Passage Barrier Removal	On going	Habitat	68	\$	33,183
Riparian Restoration	On going	Habitat	11	\$	5,531



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### General

Work with Agencies & Stakeholders	On going	Habitat	5	\$	2,212
Manage cooperater databases	On going	Habitat	14	\$	5,604
Create/Update Plan GIS Shape files	On going	Habitat	18	\$	7,316
<b>TOTALS:</b>			<b>780</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>314,173</b>

**Goal(s):** To have water of sufficient quantity to meet the needs of current and future generations, specifically including water for agriculture, and healthy and harvestable salmon, steelhead and trout populations.

### Natural Resource Measurable Result Objective:

- Enhance fish habitat while maintaining drainage/flood protection for farm fields.
- Improve hydrological conditions of the lower watersheds.

### Programmatic Measurable Result Objectives:

- Provide technical and cost share assistance to
  - Implement water conservation and development practices.
  - Landowners for the installation and maintenance of practices along eligible watercourses and wetlands.
- Implement projects with partner assistance to improve instream fish habitat. Develop and plant 24 CREP projects on 72 acres
- Maintain 129 CREP projects on 505 acres
- Remove 3 fish passage barrier culverts and replace with bridges.
- Develop alternatives for maintaining canopies of riparian forest and hedgerow buffers to prevent encroachment on farmland and impairment of drainage.

**Funding Source(s):** Natural Resources Conservation Service, Whatcom County, Washington Conservation Commission, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Environmental Protection Agency

### COMMUNITY VIABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCE

Fostering Conservation Stewardship (supporting WID's, etc.)	On going	Coordinators	18	\$	7,431
Publish Whatcom Conservation Newsletters	Annually	Education	31	\$	11,383
Update web content, maintain social media presence, and develop information videos	On going	Education & Coordinators	45	\$	18,088
Conduct Annual Native Plant Sale	Feb/Mar	Habitat	43	\$	15,690



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Build Community Support (Run with the Chums, WOW, Earth Day, SeaFeast, volunteer programs, etc.)	On going	Education	147	\$	37,367
Conduct livestock stewardship workshops (Nutrient Management Trainings, Small Farm Expo, Speaker Series, etc.)	On going	Education & Livestock	109	\$	43,227
Internship Program	On going	Education	5	\$	1,818
Higher Education Opportunities (guest lectures, tours, Internships, Capstone, etc.)	On going	Education	27	\$	13,205
Youth Education (K-12 watershed education, Youth Fair, FFA, 4H, etc.)	On going	Education	84	\$	26,469

### Public Safety

Flood Projection Projects (Assist Whatcom County Public Works)	On going	Habitat	20	\$	9,955
Drainage Enhancement Projects (Assist DIDs & WIDs)	On going	Habitat	20	\$	9,955
Climate Change Resiliency - adaption and mitigation	On going	All	5	\$	2,182
<b>TOTALS:</b>			<b>554</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>196,769</b>

### Goal(s):

- Residents will embrace a Green Infrastructure plan to guide comprehensive planning, land acquisition and development decisions.
- Residents will have a better appreciation for the value of natural resource-based industries such that they support the protection of working lands.
- More farmers and ranchers will exhibit good stewardship in protecting and enhancing water quality, quantity and habitat.
- Whatcom County residents will have an ecological understanding and place-based connection to the land, resources and economy promoting responsible stewardship and sustainable land management.
- Rural residents will be safe from fires and floods.
- Teach local citizens the value of local food sources.

### Vision:

- We envision the Whatcom CD as vital part of community interaction, not only getting information out about what we do, but having children in the community interact with the resources that surround them.
- We envision a community with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to act as stewards of local watersheds in which we live
- We envision a community that proactively protects against fires and floods.
- We envision a community that acts to protect and enhance its working lands, including healthy soils.

### District Program Measurable Result Objective:

- Greater than 2000 residents of Whatcom County and regional leaders will be reached by district programming through community outreach, educational programming or sustained engagement
- The City of Bellingham will complete a Green Infrastructure Plan.
- Whatcom County will identify and protect from development 100,000 acres of farmland.







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- The North Lynden Watershed Improvement District will continue its Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) process, broadening to include community stakeholders to identify actions that can be taken to protect farmland, improve water quality, quantity and habitat.
- Whatcom County will support a Firewise Program.

### Programmatic Measurable Result Objectives:

- *Promote conservation-wise stewardship practices to landowners, students and other public entities through various media (for e.g. bi-annual newsletter, Facebook, website...).*
- *Provide at least 2 project tours for Agency representatives, dignitaries, etc. highlighting District conservation programs, practices to benefit the environment and natural resource-based industries.*
- *Present at 5 public meetings, conferences, etc. (County Council, Ag Advisory, Shellfish Protection, WWIN, WADE, etc.)*
- *Recruit, train and support 8 water quality sampling volunteers*
- *School-based Programing:*
  - *Provide (4) internships for an introduction to Conservation Districts Programs, Agricultural Best Practices, Social Science of Conservation, AgroEcology and Involvement in Community Based Events to the urban centers*
  - *Work with (1) WWU Capstone class for project based research on farmland protection and sustainable agriculture*
  - *Engage 3 high schools and 3 elementary schools in conservation education programming including:*
    - *Support and train High School aged youth through Envirothon to explore current conservation issues, agricultural BMPs and work force development.*
    - *Work with elementary teachers and students on water quality and backyard conservation programming*
- *Recruit and assist with 5-6<sup>th</sup> grade forest tour. Host 6 workshops on topics of small farm stewardship, water quality BMPs, backyard habitat and low impact development.*
- *Connect with 2000+ rural and urban dwellers through a plant sale, workshops, tours, fun run and other events (e.g. County Fair, Youth Fair, Wings Over Water, Country Living Expo, Oyster Fest, Flora Fair, Farm Speaker Series, Sustainable Connections, Envirothon, and 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grades tour.*
- *Coordinate with other organizations and agencies on natural resource education efforts*
- *Task a District staff person(s) with developing recommendations for activities, budgets and sources of funding for establishing Firewise and Forestry programs.*
- *Task a District staff person(s) with developing recommendations for including soil health into conservation planning considerations.*

**Funding Source(s):** Whatcom County, Washington Conservation Commission, US Environmental Protection Agency, Proceeds of District Native Plant Sale

### DISTRICT OPERATIONS

Recruit/Support District Supervisors and Associates in implementing the District Charge.	On going	Board & E.D.	5	\$	2,591
Run an efficient, economical election process that delivers good customer experience.	Jan - March	Administrative	23	\$	7,983
Administer Commission Special Project Grants	On going	Administrative	5	\$	1,597
Support Conservation Technical Development	On going	Research	68	\$	30,266





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## Whatcom Conservation District (Adopted May 12, 2016)

General Technical Assistance to Agencies, Public and Landowners not addressed through other programs.	On going	Board & E.D.	56	\$	32,387
Administer Programs/Grants consistent with prescribed management standards	On going	E.D. & Coordinators, Administrative	198	\$	79,554
Pursue and obtain funding to implement District Annual and Long Range Plans	On going	E.D. & Coordinators	36	\$	17,747
Provide the professional development, training, equipment and support to District staff necessary to successfully accomplish their respective program responsibilities	On going	E.D. & Administrative	7	\$	2,395
Ensure Political Support for District Programs (updates, tours, presentations to City, County, State and Federal Representatives)	On going	E.D. & Coordinators	14	\$	6,387
<b>TOTAL:</b>			<b>410</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>180,905</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>			<b>3,758</b>		<b>1,446,098</b>

### Goal(s):

- Strengthen partnerships and relationships with NRCS and other agencies and groups.
- Put the District on firm financial footing.
- Maintain the appropriate technical staff to accomplish District goals

### District Program Measurable Result Objective:

- *Support the District's Board so they may serve successfully as the grassroots representatives of landowners and general public of Whatcom County by achieving widespread voluntary cooperation in natural resource conservation programs.*
- *Serve as the technical resource for landowners, general public and agencies on conservation matters.*
- *Administer District operations to ensure compliance with its enabling statute RCW 89.08 et seq., as well as the policies and standards established by the Commission or other funding sources.*
- *Capture financial resources to implement Annual and Long Range Plans*
- *Participate in the County's initiative to develop a comprehensive water resources management funding strategy.*
- *Maintain the appropriate technical staff to accomplish the District goals.*

### Funding Source(s): All Grants, Discretionary Funds



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**Whatcom Conservation District** (Adopted May 12, 2016)

**FY17 Desired Level of Staffing and Funding: (budget for FY 2018 – 7/1/17 – 6/30/18)**

<b>All Programs &amp; Operations</b>	<b>Full-time Equivalents</b>	<b>Estimated Funding</b>
Water Quality	9.0	\$ 754,250.76
Water Quantity/Habitat Enhancement	3.5	\$ 314,173.15
Community Viability, Sustainability & Resilience	2.5	\$ 196,769.27
District Operations	<u>1.8</u>	<u>\$ 180,905.22</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>\$ 1,446,098.40</b>
Overhead (25%)		<u>\$ 361,524.60</u>
		<u>\$ 1,807,623.00</u>