



FY 2015 (7/1/14 – 6/30/15) Annual Work Plan Whatcom Conservation District (Adopted May 20, 2014)

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Mission of the Whatcom Conservation District

“To assist land managers with their conservation choices.”



Natural Resource Priorities

Priority #1 -- Water Quality: Increasing trends of bacterial contamination are threatening the closure of Portage Bay to commercial shellfish harvest. Drayton Harbor is either closed to commercial shellfish harvesting or conditionally open during a few months of the year. A portion of Birch Bay is closed to the recreational harvest of shellfish. There are a number of significant sources of bacteria including failing septic systems, waste water treatment plants, wildlife and livestock. Conservation District programs can address livestock contributions. We can also address nutrient contributions that can negatively impact water; surface and groundwater.

The District will work to: Protect and enhance water quality for beneficial uses by addressing nutrient and fecal coliform contamination of the Nooksack River and its lowland tributaries; California, Dakota and Terrell Creeks; and Sumas River.

This is a regional resource priority see:

- Executive Order 12-07 Washington's Response to Ocean Acidification, December 2012;
- 2012-2013 Action Agenda for Puget Sound (August 2012)
 - C3. Prevent, Reduce and Control Agricultural Runoff

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.

Priority #2 -- Water Quantity: Many of the lowland tributaries suffer from low flows in the summer. There is an increasing concern over the availability of sufficient water to meet the needs of our diverse community as manifest in no less than three, multi-day public symposiums within the past year. This is exacerbated by the uncertainty provoked by a request of the Tribes to adjudicate in Federal Court their reserved tribal treaty water rights.

The District will work to: Protect and enhance water quantity for beneficial uses by improving or re-establishing important watershed processes; retrofitting drainage systems with control structures to avoid over-draining the soil profile; and encouraging the widespread adoption of water conservation practices on working farms and ranches.

This is a State and Regional priority see:

- 2012-2013 Action Agenda for Puget Sound (August 2012)
 - Protect and Recover Salmon
- *Preparing for a Changing Climate: Washington State's Integrated Climate Response Strategy* (April 2012)



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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 and the Bertrand and North Lynden Watershed Improvement Districts.

Priority #3 -- 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. Some species (Spring Chinook, Bull Trout and Steelhead Trout) that use these areas are now threatened with extinction. The lack of progress in re-establishing fish habitat and wildlife corridors on agricultural lands has prompted the conditioning of funding for best management practices upon installation of wide buffers along watercourses.

The District will work to: Deliver an effective program of voluntary restoration of riparian and wetland areas to advance locally developed plans.

This is a regional resource priority:

- See Agenda for Puget Sound, The Action Agenda in Whatcom and WRIA 1, August 2012.
 - Protect and restore upland, freshwater, and riparian ecosystems

Other entities engaged in addressing this resource concern: Whatcom County, Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, Whatcom Land Trust, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Tribe of Indians; Bertrand and North Lynden Watershed Improvement Districts.

Priority #4 -- Conserving Whatcom's Green Infrastructure Network: Green Infrastructure is the County's natural life-support system which 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, (e.g. Firewise). 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: Integrate Green Infrastructure planning process into the County's Critical Areas Update, including garnering broad community support for the outcome. Support creation and implementation of Watershed Improvement Districts which, in turn, will contribute to improved water quality, quantity and habitat.

This is a regional resource priority see:

- 2012-2013 Action Agenda for Puget Sound (August 2012),
 - A1 Focus land development away from ecologically important and sensitive areas
 - A3 Protect and Steward Ecologically Sensitive Rural and Resource Lands

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



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Program Areas: *There are four program areas: Water Quality, Water Quantity/Habitat, Community Education/Outreach and District Operations.*

Natural Resource Priority Program Area: Water Quality

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

Activities for FY 2015	Target Dates	Person Responsible	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding
TASKS				
Commercial Livestock				
Provide Technical Assistance to Livestock Operations	On going	Livestock Team	11	\$ 5,180
Conduct Risk Assessments	On going	Livestock Team	23	\$ 9,720
Develop/Update Custom LNMPs	On going	Livestock Team	146	\$ 46,737
Implement Custom LNMPs	On going	Livestock Team	59	\$ 26,121
Implement Cost-share Program	On going	Livestock Team	11	\$ 5,192
ARM Research Project	On going	Science Team	257	\$ 72,472
Other Research Projects	On going	Science Team	32	\$ 10,830
TSP - Planning & Design work	On going	Engineering Team	295	\$ 126,359
Non-Commercial Livestock				
Provide Technical Assistance to Livestock Operations	On going	Livestock Team	5	\$ 1,541
Conduct Risk Assessments	On going	Livestock Team	23	\$ 7,704
Develop Standardized LNMPs	On going	Livestock Team	52	\$ 17,719
Implement Standardized LNMPs	On going	Livestock Team	56	\$ 19,260
Implement Cost-share Program	On going	Livestock Team	9	\$ 3,048
EPA Birch Bay Project	On going	Livestock Team	119	\$ 47,316



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General

Work with Agencies & Stakeholders	On going	As Appointed	50	\$	25,473
TOTALS:			1145	\$	424,673

Natural Resource Priority Program Area: Water Quantity/Habitat

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.
- Partner with the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association and obtain grant funding to re-meander and install large woody debris in straightened and degraded watercourses.
- 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.
- Replace two hardened crossings with bridges.
- Daylight 500 linear feet of stream
- Construct one wetland.

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



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Activities for FY 2015	Target Dates	Person Responsible	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding
RIPARIAN/WETLAND ENHANCEMENT CREP				
Recruit new CREP Projects	Winter/Spring	Riparian Team	68	\$ 20,869
Develop and Plant CREP Projects	Winter/Spring	Riparian Team	200	\$ 68,192
Monitor and properly maintain CREP Projects	Summer/Fall	Riparian Team	378	\$ 111,449
Effectively administer CREP cost-share and maintenance reimbursement program	On going	Riparian Team	92	\$ 30,259
WCFCZD Riparian and Flood Control Projects				
Plant & maintain riparian buffers, provide TA for flood project	Spring	Frank	20	\$ 8,170
Conservation Partners Salmon Recovery Project				
Recruit landowners and secure habitat project funding	On going	Frank	104	\$ 41,756
General				
Record plan and management data records into database	On going	Riparian Team	9	\$ 3,311
Create/Update Plan GIS Shape files	On going	Riparian Team	32	\$ 11,091
Mitigate/adapt for climate change	On going	Riparian Team	7	\$ 3,635
Receive Professional Training Appropriate for Staff to Meet Program Tasks	On going	Riparian Team	20	\$ 7,012
TOTALS:			929	\$ 305,742



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District Program Area: Community Education/Outreach

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.

District Program Measurable Result Objective:

- Whatcom County will include a Green Infrastructure Plan as part of its Critical Areas Ordinance update.
- Whatcom County will identify and protect from development 100,000 acres of farmland.
- A Watershed Improvement District will engage in a Coordinated Resource Management process with community stakeholders to identify actions that can be taken to protect farmland, improve water quality, water quantity and habitat.

Programmatic Measurable Result Objectives:

- *Meet with community stakeholders to describe the Green Infrastructure process and recruit support.*
- *Provide Green Infrastructure training for local agency planners and key community members.*
- *Promote conservation-wise stewardship practices to landowners, students and other public entities through various media.*
- *Provide 2-3 project tours for Agency representatives, dignitaries, etc. highlighting District conservation programs and practices to benefit the environment.*
- *Host 4 workshops on topics of small farm stewardship and low impact development highlighting beneficial practices.*
- *Connect with 500 rural and urban dwellers through a plant sale, workshops and county fair.*
- *Coordinate with other organizations and agencies on natural resource education efforts*
- *Hire outreach communication person*
- *Outreach communication person will develop an education outreach plan, outlining 3 education initiatives*

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

Activities for FY 2015	Target Dates	Person Responsible	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding
PUBLIC INFORMATION & EDUCATION				
Green Infrastructure process	On going	Boggs	11	\$ 6,058
North Lynden WID CRM process participation	On going	Boggs	11	\$ 6,058



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Publish Whatcom Conservation News	Bi-annually	WCD Staff	56	\$	20,696
Publish presentations, flyers, videos, internet content	On going	WCD Staff	2	\$	770
Conduct Annual Native Plant Sale	Feb/Mar	WCD Staff	41	\$	12,647
Provide support (office, graphics, website & GIS) to partners in sub-basin initiatives	On going	WCD Staff	34	\$	11,556
Community outreach	On going	WCD Staff	113	\$	44,410
Conduct livestock stewardship workshops	On going	Livestock Team	47	\$	17,340
Conduct tours of projects for agency reps, public, etc.	On going	WCD Staff	29	\$	13,088
TOTALS:			344	\$	132,623

FOREST PROTECTION

TA-Landowners develop/implement forest plans	On going	Wayne	0	\$	-
TA-Landowners develop/implement Firewise plans	On going	Wayne	2	\$	847
TOTALS:			2	\$	847

District Program Area: District Operations

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.*



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Funding Source(s): All Grants, Discretionary Funds

Activities for FY 2015	Target Dates	Person Responsible	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding
DISTRICT OPERATIONS				
Recruit/Support District Supervisors and Associates in implementing the District Charge.	On going	Board & Executive Director	5	\$ 2,423
General Technical Assistance to Agencies, Public and Landowners not addressed through other programs.	On going	Board & Executive Director	56	\$ 30,290
Administer Programs/Grants consistent with prescribed management standards	On going	Administrative Team	191	\$ 72,773
Pursue and obtain funding to implement District Annual and Long Range Plans	On going	Exec. Dir. & Appointed Staff	9	\$ 4,846
Provide the training, equipment and support to District staff necessary to successfully accomplish their respective program responsibilities	On going	Administrative Team	7	\$ 2,719
TOTAL:			268	\$ 113,052

FY15 Desired Level of Staffing and Funding: (budget for FY 2015 – 7/1/14 – 6/10/15)

Operations	Full-time Equivalents	Estimated Funding
Improving Water Resources	5.09	\$ 424,672.74
Habitat Enhancement	4.13	\$ 306,588.24
Public Information & Education	1.53	\$ 132,622.92
District Operations	1.19	\$ 113,051.70
TOTAL:		\$ 976,935.60
Overhead (25%)		\$ 244,233.90
		\$ 1,221,169.50