



# FY2022 (7/1/21 – 6/30/22) Annual Work Plan

## Whatcom Conservation District

For More Information Contact: [WCD@whatcomcd.org](mailto:WCD@whatcomcd.org)



### Mission

*“The Whatcom Conservation District assists land managers with their conservation choices through technical and financial assistance to implement best management practices so that the natural resources will be available to future generations.”*

### Natural Resource Priorities

#### ▪ Water Quality

- Shellfish harvest areas in Portage Bay remain closed to fall harvest because of high fecal coliform in growing waters. Drayton Harbor is threatened with a shellfish growing water downgrade. Some drinking water wells have higher than the maximum level of nitrate. Lake Whatcom remains vulnerable to the harmful effects of algal blooms due to excessive levels of phosphorous.
- This is both a regional and local priority.
- Data relied upon
  - Bacteria - Ensuring abundant, healthy shellfish for ecosystem health and for commercial, subsistence and recreational harvest consistent with ecosystem protection is Strategy No. 19 for the 2018-2022 Action Agenda for Puget Sound.
  - Nitrate - Nitrate is a concern for both drinking water supplies ([See here.](#)) and Puget Sound ([See here.](#))
  - Phosphorous - Lake Whatcom water quality has been deteriorating due to increased phosphorous inputs that are resulting in algal blooms and depleted oxygen levels. ([See here](#))
- Other entities engaged in addressing
  - Bacteria in surface water include Whatcom County Public Works, Health & Planning Departments; Lummi Nation & Nooksack Indian Tribe, Washington State Departments of Agriculture, Health & Ecology, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. ([See here](#))
  - Nitrate pollution as part of an international transboundary nitrogen pilot includes natural resource scientists and natural resource professionals from Canada, US, the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe. ([See here.](#))
  - Phosphorous in Lake Whatcom include the City of Bellingham, Whatcom County and Lake Whatcom Water & Sewer District. ([See here](#))

#### ▪ Inadequate Habitat

- Fish passage barriers, inadequate riparian areas, and inadequate instream habitat features impair the productivity of valued salmon species and impair the ecosystem processes that provide benefits for adjacent landowners as well as fish and wildlife. The lack of prey is a limiting factor to the recovery of the Southern Resident Orca. ([See here](#))
- The lack of undeveloped and connected patches of native vegetation for movement and crossings in lowland Whatcom County limit wildlife both for local and migrating wildlife. ([See here](#))
- This is both a regional and local priority.
- Data relied upon includes WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Plan ([See here.](#)) and 2018-2022 Action Agenda for the Puget Sound ([See here.](#)).



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- *Other entities engaged in addressing habitat include Whatcom County, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe of Indians, Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, Whatcom Land Trust, USDA FSA and NRCS.*
- **Water Quantity**
  - *There is concern that there is not enough water to meet the needs of our diverse community now and into the future due to projected population growth.*
  - *Flooding during severe climate fluctuations affects agricultural lands, urban areas along the river as well as sustainable salmon habitat.*
  - *This is both a state and local priority.*
  - *Data relied upon includes Chapter 173-501 WAC Instream Resources Protection Program – Nooksack Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) ([See here](#)) and WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan & Associated Documents. ([See here](#))*
  - *Other entities engaged in addressing this include the WRIA 1 Planning Unit, Whatcom County, City of Bellingham, PUD #1, Washington State Department of Ecology, Lummi Nation, and Nooksack Indian Tribe.*
- **Conserving Working Lands**
  - *Well stewarded farm and forestry land provides environmental benefits in addition to food, fiber and fuel. These include aquifer recharge, storm water retention, and habitat. They also provide aesthetic and recreational values.*
  - *Regulations, market competition, and influx of people into the County are raising land values.*
  - *Low market prices for commodities and competition for land by other land uses make it difficult to make farming and forestry sustainable in Whatcom County.*
  - *This is a national, state and local priority*
  - *Data relied upon includes that from American Farmland Trust ([See here](#)), Office of Farmland Preservation ([See here](#)) and Whatcom County. ([See here](#))*
  - *Other entities engaged in addressing this include Whatcom County, Whatcom Land Trust, Sustainable Connection, American Farmland Trust and The Conservation Fund.*

**Program Areas:** *There are two program areas: “Natural Resource” and “District”. Natural resource programs are those created to address the natural resource priorities identified in the District’s Five-year Plan. District programs are those that support basic operations, education and outreach with landowners, and engagement with other agencies and groups to advance the District’s mission. To support these program areas, District staff have been organized into five teams: Livestock, Habitat, Science and Research, Education and Outreach, Administration.*

### **Natural Resource Priority Program Area: Water Quality**

#### **Goals:**

- *Contribute to upgrade of all shellfish harvest areas impaired by coliform bacteria pollution.*
- *Reduce reactive nitrogen (N<sup>r</sup>) pollution in surface and groundwater to below water quality standard.*
- *Achieve the phosphorous TMDL limit set for Lake Whatcom.*
- *Increase awareness of water quality impacts and mitigation measures for sustained water quality improvements.*



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### **Natural Resource Measurable Result Objective:**

- Contribute to the success of our local PIC program so that sampled freshwater sites are analyzed and displayed in a manner to change behavior to meet the water quality standard for fecal coliform bacteria.
- Nutrient management plans will be developed, implemented and evaluated to reduce the number of domestic wells showing nitrate levels at or above the drinking water standard and reduce the amount nutrients and bacteria entering estuarine environments in adjacent bays of the Salish Sea via surface runoff.
- Advanced storm water projects will be designed to provide assistance to landowners to install and reduce phosphorous entering Lake Whatcom so as to achieve TMDL targets.
- Work local municipalities to monitor water quality and implement an outreach program supporting behavior change by city residents that might be impacting water quality and support National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) efforts in the region.
- Conduct research and demonstration projects evaluating the effectiveness of agricultural conservation practices on water quality protection to improve adoption.

### **Programmatic Measurable Result Objective:**

- Commercial Livestock Operations
  - 25 Technical Assistance and Assessments conducted
  - 10 Plans developed
  - 10 Plans Implemented or Projects Installed
  - 10 Cost share Projects Facilitated
- Non-commercial Livestock Operations
  - 40 Technical Assistance and Assessments conducted
  - 30 Plans developed
  - 15 Plans Implemented or Projects Installed
  - 10 Cost share Projects Facilitated
- Complete 14 residential LID projects through the Lake Whatcom Homeowner Incentive Program (HIP)
- Research and Effectiveness Monitoring
  - Begin implementation of research on water level control structure on agricultural lands to manage subsurface water to improve agricultural productivity while conserving and protecting surface and groundwater resources.
  - Assist the Nooksack-Fraser Transboundary Nitrogen Project evaluating the nature and extent and sources of reactive nitrogen contamination in Whatcom County.
  - Evaluation of the effectiveness of best management practices at four Edge of Field monitoring sites.
  - Conduct instream monitoring of pollutants (e.g. nitrate, E.coli, total suspended solids, etc.) to understand trends and concentration of in-stream pollutants.
  - Support the continued development of local microbial source tracking (MST) methodologies.
  - Manure Spreading Advisory support and improvement.
  - Support installation of weather and soil monitoring stations for use by farmers by WSU's AgWeatherNet.



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- Continue work with WSU in developing climate and precipitation modeling to assess likely changes in future weather patterns on BMP effectiveness.
- Report to partners and landowners on results of county-wide water quality data collection, display and analysis.
- Improve characterization of watersheds and management by landowners in partnership with NRCS on NWQI Watershed Assessment reports.

Funding Source(s): Whatcom County, Washington State Department of Health, Washington State Conservation Commission, City of Bellingham, City of Lynden, USDA-NRCS

<b>WATER QUALITY</b>	<b>Target Dates</b>	<b>Team/Person Responsible</b>	<b>Time (Days) Required</b>	<b>Estimated Funding</b>
<b>Livestock Sources Technical Assistance</b>				
Provide Technical Assistance	On going	Livestock	56	\$18,758
Conduct Risk Assessments	On going	Livestock	97	\$29,318
Develop/Update Conservation Plans	On going	Livestock	297	\$78,966
Implement Conservation Plans	On going	Livestock	43	\$10,770
Cooperator Follow-up & Adaptive Management	On going	Livestock	41	\$10,794
<b>Livestock Sources Financial Assistance</b>				
Structural Practice Planning & Implementation		Livestock	56	\$17,874
Advanced Waste Treatment Practices (RCPP) - monitoring	On going	Research	25	\$7,963
Implement Cost-share Program	On going	Livestock	5	\$1,430
Complete Cultural Resource Investigations	On going	Habitat	11	\$4,595
<b>Research, Data, &amp; Effectiveness Monitoring</b>				
Edge of Field Program	On going	Research	145	\$44,048
NRCS-NWQI Watershed Assessments	Spring-Fall	Research	66	\$24,263
Water Quality Data Coordination	On going	Research	191	\$68,854
Discovery Farms Program	On going	Research	23	\$11,291
Coordinate research, monitoring, and modeling projects and activities	On going	Research	54	\$22,061
CIG - Water Control Structures	On going	Research	45	\$16,999
<b>Watershed Improvement Projects</b>				
Lake Whatcom HIP Program	On going	Education & Habitat	245	\$92,027



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Local NPDES Stormwater Education	On going	Education	113	\$34,484
Non-livestock Conservation Practice Planning and Implementation	On going	Livestock	0	\$-
<b>General</b>				
Work with other Agencies & Stakeholders	On going	Livestock	56	\$22,962
Manage databases	On going	Corina	11	\$3,722
Map/Maintain GIS Layers	On going	Andrew	11	\$4,846
<b>TOTALS:</b>			<b>1591</b>	<b>\$526,022</b>

### Natural Resource Priority Program Area: Habitat

#### Goal(s):

- Enhancement of riparian areas along lowland streams and wetlands to improve fish and wildlife habitat and improve water quality.
- Enhancement of salmon habitat by increasing channel complexity and instream fish habitat in priority habitat areas.
- Restoration of access to fish habitat by removing fish passage barriers.
- Restoration of access to habitat by restoring lower Nooksack River floodplain connections without adversely affecting the agricultural base.
- Protection of juvenile fish by assisting producers with support and resources to secure and use fish friendly pump intakes.
- Integration of Oregon Spotted Frog habitat protections into salmon habitat enhancement projects.

#### Natural Resource Measurable Result Objective:

- 2 miles and 20 acres of new riparian buffers in priority reaches
- 8 barriers to fish passage removed
- 10 miles of salmon habitat opened
- 3 instream wood habitat structures installed

#### Programmatic Measurable Result Objective:

- 35 landowners contacted
- 15 plans written
- 20 projects installed
- 110 projects maintained

**Funding Source(s):** Washington State Conservation Commission, Whatcom County, USDA NRCS/FSA, USFWS



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<b>HABITAT ENHANCEMENT</b>	<b>Target Dates</b>	<b>Team/Person Responsible</b>	<b>Time (Days) Required</b>	<b>Estimated Funding</b>
<b>Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program</b>				
Plan and contract new projects and cooperators	Winter/Spring	Habitat	191	\$84,572
Plan and contract re-enrollments	Winter/Spring	Habitat	56	\$23,422
Develop and implement project	Winter/Spring	Habitat	135	\$58,303
Monitor and maintain projects	Summer/Fall	Habitat	74	\$33,043
Administer CREP cost-share/maintenance reimbursements	On going	Habitat	11	\$4,595
<b>NRCS Funded Habitat Projects</b>				
Fish Passage Barrier Removal	On going	Frank	45	\$22,475
Riparian Restoration	On going	Frank	11	\$5,619
Instream habitat	On going	Frank	11	\$5,619
<b>Other Habitat Projects</b>				
Nooksack River fish screening	On going	Frank	2	\$1,124
Fish Screens	On going	Frank	0	\$-
<b>General</b>				
Work with other Agencies & Stakeholders	On going	Frank	27	\$13,076
Manage databases	On going	Wayne/Andrew	34	\$14,036
Map/Maintain GIS Layers	On going	Andrew	14	\$5,815
<b>TOTALS:</b>			<b>612</b>	<b>\$271,698</b>

## Natural Resource Priority Program Area: Water Quantity

### Goal(s):

- Contribute to the development of a water resource management plan and strategy that assists resolution of the conflicts between instream flow, sustainability of harvestable fish, natural salmon productivity and viable resource lands through:
  - Lead county-wide domestic water conservation program.
  - Cost effective water use efficiencies for resource landowners and operators to keep lands in production with legal water allocation of water in time and place consistent with agreed fish productivity (aquatic, riparian habitat and seasonal stream flows) by agricultural water users and fish and wildlife co-managers
- Support Individual landowners, special districts, and municipalities in addressing water quantity concerns (too much/too little).



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### Natural Resource Measurable Result Objective:

- Decrease in Whatcom Water Alliance members Summer water use and/or Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU)
- Implementation of agricultural irrigation water use efficiencies and practices without prejudice to existing water rights.
- Support water use efficiencies by agricultural and residential users to conserve water and increase seasonal instream flows.

### Programmatic Measurable Result Objective:

- Framework for hiring an individual to head a Water Use Efficiencies and Conservation program in partnership with Whatcom County.
- Research how water control structures in drainage structures can improve the quality and quantity of sub-surface ground water resources while maintaining/improving crop productivity.
- Install and improve data coverage (soil water probes) and public data accessibility at an additional weather station for irrigation decision support in cooperation with WSU's AgWeatherNet.
- 5 landowners will adopt and implement of irrigation efficiencies practices with technical planning and assistance.
- Increase website content and outreach events/media on irrigation and water efficiencies for agricultural water users.
- Lead county-wide domestic water conservation program with Whatcom Water Alliance (WWA):
  1. WWA website and data portal created
  2. 20 WWA members engaged in WUE efforts
  3. 50 Water use efficiency rebates to domestic landowner
  4. A school-based curriculum developed on Water use efficiency using the Whatcom Explorer Mobile Watershed

**Funding Source(s):** Washington Conservation Commission, Whatcom County, USDA-NRCS, and City of Lynden, Whatcom Water Alliance members

<b>WATER QUANTITY</b>	<b>Target Dates</b>	<b>Team/Person Responsible</b>	<b>Time (Days) Required</b>	<b>Estimated Funding</b>
<b>Develop Water Use Efficiencies &amp; Conservation Programs</b>				
Agriculture	Thru Winter	Nichole	25	\$10,175
Domestic (WWA)	On going	Aneka	99	\$34,956
<b>Address Flooding &amp; Drainage Problems</b>				
Flood Protection Projects (Assist Whatcom County Public Works)	On going	Habitat	11	\$5,619
Drainage Enhancement Projects (Assist DIDs & WIDs)	On going	Habitat	14	\$6,588
<b>Other Water Quantity Projects</b>				
Irrigation Water Management	On going	Nichole	14	\$6,390



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Water Development	On going	Frank	0	\$-
<b>General</b>				
Work with other Agencies & Stakeholders	On going	George/Frank	7	\$3,751
Manage databases		Andrew	2	\$969
Map/Maintain GIS Layers		Andrew	2	\$969
<b>TOTALS:</b>			<b>173</b>	<b>\$69,417</b>

## Natural Resource Priority Program Area: Conserving Working Lands

### Goal(s):

- Whatcom County residents appreciate the value of natural resource-based industries and support the sustainability of working lands.
- Farmers, foresters, and ranchers will increasingly exhibit good stewardship to protect and enhance water quality, quantity, restore habitat through implementation of conservation practices
- Farmers, foresters, and ranchers are publicly acknowledged for delivering environmental services to their community.
- Reduction of regulatory burden on Working lands will be reduced through adoption of best management practices
- Markets are developed to improve the benefits and costs of operations and sustain the infrastructure to support viability of working lands to protect them from conversion to other uses.
- Reduce risk of harm to people and property through assisting in landowner adoption of fire preparedness practices.

### Natural Resource Measurable Result Objective:

- Acres protected through purchase of development rights.
- Landowner recognition programs will demonstrate and highlight positive steps landowners are taking to protect and enhance environmental values.
- Advance the Whatcom County Ag-Watershed Pilot Project with regard to establishing an environmental services marketplace.
- Reduce wildfire potential and increase preparedness in areas of moderate to high wildfire risk.

### Programmatic Measurable Result Objective:

- 2 landowners will adopt and implement stewardship plans and participate in the County's RCPP
- Attend 10 Ag Advisory and relevant Purchase of Development Rights Committee meetings
- 10 landowners will be recognized publicly for their commitment to land stewardship
- Wildfire Risk Reduction Program:
  1. Complete 20 individual home wildfire risk assessments & wildfire risk reduction plans
  2. Give 3 presentations to communities on wildfire preparedness
  3. Assist 3 communities with wildfire planning efforts
  4. Establish 1 new Firewise USA Community





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5. Complete 2 hazardous fuels reduction projects

**Funding Source(s):** Washington Conservation Commission, City of Bellingham, Skagit CD & Whatcom County

<b>CONSERVING WORKING LANDS</b>	<b>Target Dates</b>	<b>Team/Person Responsible</b>	<b>Time (Days) Required</b>	<b>Estimated Funding</b>
<b>Assist farmers access equipment</b>				
Manure Spreader	Spring/Summer	Livestock Team	2.25	\$419
Poultry processing	On going	Livestock Team	2.25	\$419
<b>Support local initiatives</b>				
Attend County Ag Advisory & PDR Committees	On going	George/Larry	23	\$13,138
Stewardship recognition	On going	Outreach	38	\$14,474
Environmental market place to add to the farmers bottom line	On going	George	11	\$6,569
Become more resilient, adapt or mitigate harmful impacts of climate change	On going	Team Leaders	11	\$3,905
Reduce risk of loss to fire	On going	Edu & Outreach	155	\$54,263
<b>TOTALS:</b>			<b>243</b>	<b>\$93,187</b>

## District Program Area: Education and Outreach

### Goal(s):

- 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.
- Farmers, producers, and landowners exhibit good stewardship in protecting and enhancing water quality, water quantity, and wildlife habitat.
- Whatcom Conservation District is a vital part of community interaction; seen as trusted advisors, with a depth of understanding of both the regulatory framework and land conservation stewardship practices.
- All Whatcom County residents and elected officials value natural resource-based industries such that they support the protection of working lands and their land managers.

### Programmatic Measurable Result Objective:

- Enroll 40 new voluntary technical assistance contacts to our non-dairy farm planning team



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- Increase website traffic 10,000 hits above last year
- Monthly e-news (Reaching 1000 people/month) Increase number of e-news subscribers (200 per year)
- Whatcom Explorer Watershed Education (20 schools, 55 teachers, 1,500 students/year) \*
- Develop high quality digital lesson plans and curriculum to support teachers and parents (4 per year)\*
- Print material including newsletter, postcards (Reaching 4,000+)
- Develop high quality digital library on stewardship related topics (8 per year) \*
- Installation of conservation practice signs on agricultural fields around county (i.e., Conservation Cover, Cover Crops, etc.)
- Increase Social Media presence Facebook and YouTube (increase by 20% over previous year)
- Maintain a community presence by nurturing partnerships and offering to present, educate, table, etc. at community functions (in-person or virtual)\*
- Coordinate events, expos, trainings and tours to promote voluntary stewardship \*
- Reach out to minority land users to support cultural diversity, understanding of conservation principles and exhibition of good stewardship.

*\*will depend on COVID19 recommendations*

**Funding Source(s):** Washington Conservation Commission, Whatcom County, City of Lynden, Washington State Department of Agriculture, and Whatcom Community Foundation

<b>PUBLIC EDUCATION &amp; OUTREACH</b>	<b>Target Dates</b>	<b>Team/Person Responsible</b>	<b>Time (Days) Required</b>	<b>Estimated Funding</b>
<b>Outreach</b>				
Outreach to Community so that it values and supports agriculture, forestry and District programs	On going	Aneka	45	\$13,793.40
Outreach to landowners and occupiers so that they exhibit good conservation stewardship	On going	Aneka	45	\$13,793
<b>Social Marketing Initiatives</b>				
Survey Landowners/Community as to awareness and needs	On going	Education & Coordinators	0	
Publish Newsletters/flyers/articles/notices	Annually	Education	36	\$11,917
Maintain web content, social media presence & information videos	On going	Education & Coordinators	36	\$13,526
<b>Conducting Events &amp; Workshops</b>				



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Run with the Chums, WOW, Earth Day, Sea Feast etc.	On going	Education	43	\$13,935
Livestock stewardship workshops (Nutrient Management Trainings, Small Farm Expo, Speaker Series, etc.)	On going	Education & Livestock	88	\$27,813
Plant Sale	Jan-Mar 2022	Habitat	52	\$20,308
<b>Engaging Educational Community</b>				
Higher Education Opportunities (guest lectures, tours, Internships, Capstone, etc.)	On going	Education & Research	16	\$7,086
Watershed Education	On going	Education	29	\$6,850
<b>General</b>				
Work with other Agencies & Stakeholders	On going	Education/Research	27	\$11,552
Manage databases	On going	Andrew	2	\$969
Map/Maintain GIS Layers	On going	Andrew	2	\$969
<b>TOTALS:</b>			<b>421</b>	<b>\$142,512</b>

### District Program Area: Operations & Administration

#### Goal(s):

The District will be recognized as:

- An “honest broker” who is accepted by all sides as impartial.
- A “trusted messenger” in the Community.
- A leader in anticipating and fulfilling the conservation needs of Whatcom County.
- Efficient in applying taxpayer dollars to effective conservation programs.

#### Programmatic Measurable Result Objective:

- Introduce WCD to 10 key stakeholder audiences in the community
- Complete updates of the District's
  - personnel manual
  - policies
  - compensation package
- Complete analysis of the District's funding model and alternatives.

**Funding Source(s):** Washington State Conservation Commission & District Savings



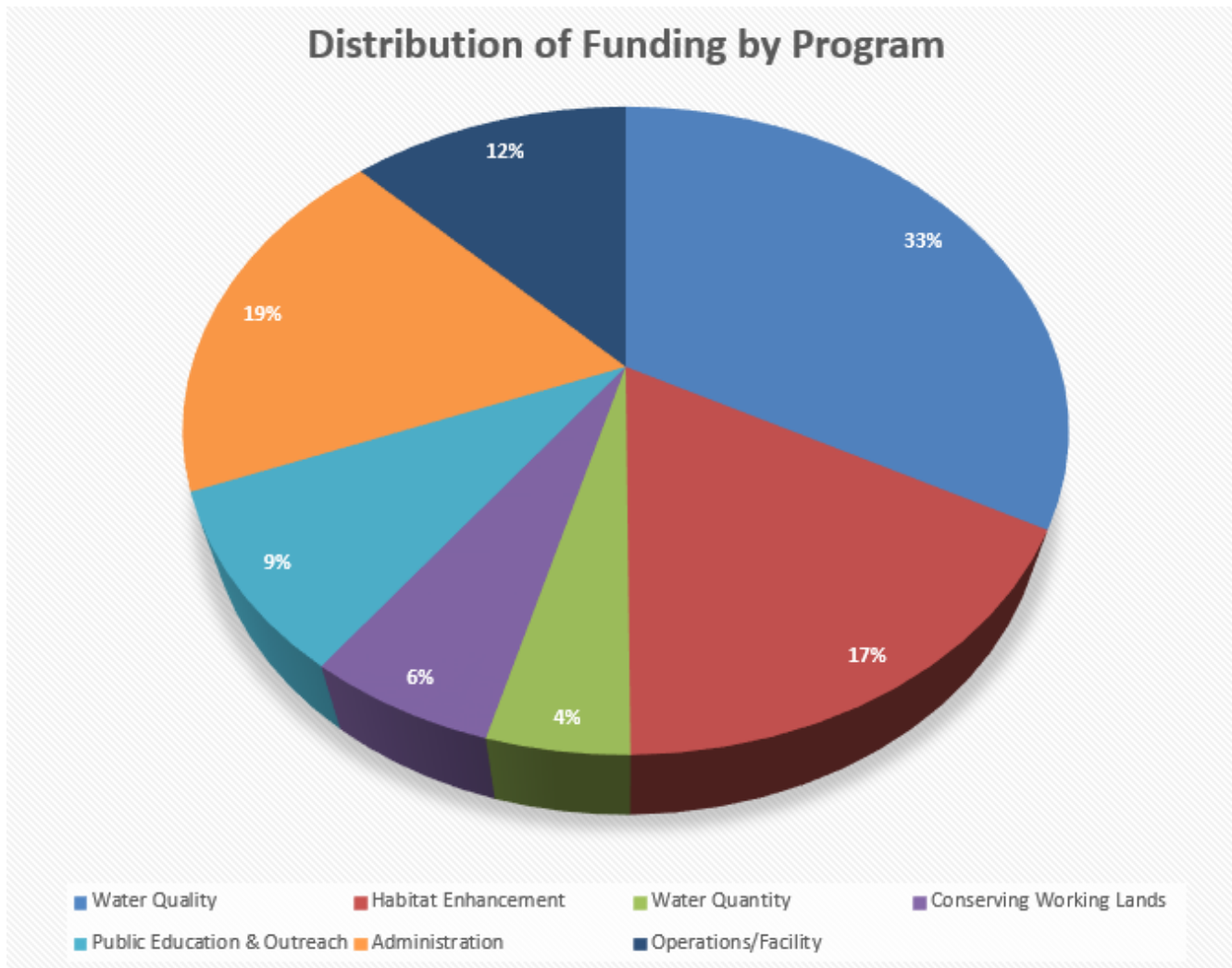
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<b>DISTRICT OPERATIONS</b>	<b>Target Dates</b>	<b>Team/Person Responsible</b>	<b>Time (Days) Required</b>	<b>Estimated Funding</b>
<b><i>Special Initiatives</i></b>				
Establish the District as an Honest Broker and Trusted Messenger in the eyes of the Community	On going	Board & E.D.	23	\$10,293
Develop Rates and Charges request	Jul - Sep	Board & E.D.	23	\$13,138
Review/update District policies, personnel manual, employee compensation package and funding model.	Jul - Dec	Board & E.D.	56	\$32,846
<b><i>External</i></b>				
General Technical Assistance to anyone not in specific program	On going	All Staff	27	\$10,519
Work with other Agencies & Stakeholders		George	23	\$13,138
WSCC Center for Technical Development	On going	Nichole	52	\$25,000
<b><i>Internal</i></b>				
Administer Programs/Grants	On going	Management Team	297	\$124,355
Provide the professional development, training, equipment and support to District staff necessary to successfully accomplish their respective program responsibilities	On going	E.D. & Team Coordinators	79	\$39,090
Run an efficient, economical election process	Jan - March	Dawn	34	\$12,904
Manage databases	On going	Andrew	23	\$9,691
Maintain Communications/Network/Computer systems	On going	Andrew	23	\$9,691
<b>TOTAL:</b>			<b>657</b>	<b>\$300,666</b>



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## Fiscal Year 2022 Budget





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	<b>Full-time Equivalents</b>	<b>Estimated Funding</b>	
Water Quality	7.1	\$526,022	33%
Habitat Enhancement	2.7	\$271,698	17%
Water Quantity	0.8	\$69,417	4%
Conserving Working Lands	1.1	\$93,187	6%
Public Education & Outreach	1.9	\$142,512	9%
Administration	<u>2.9</u>	\$300,666	19%
Operations/Facility		\$196,490	<u>12%</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>\$1,599,992</b>	<b>100%</b>



Photo by Gabriella Mednick, WCD



Photo by Gabriella Mednick, WCD