

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS OF WASHINGTON STATE

your window to healthy lands

Creating a successful strategy for achieving long-term sustainable funding

#1 Supporting the basics

A long-term strategy will require:

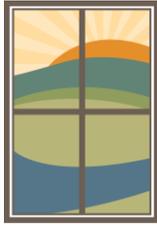
- Covering the true cost of basic operations.
- Enhanced state support for basic and critical operations.
- Securing and leveraging local dollars.

The Challenge:

- Current levels of state funding do not cover critical CD operations costs.
- Not all communities are utilizing their local funding authority to support locally-led conservation.
- The cap on assessments for most districts was set in 1989 and has not been adjusted for inflation.
- Although new Rates and Charges legislation was authorized in 2012 (HB 2267), rate caps remain at 1989 levels, with the exception of districts with populations over 480,000. The cap was raised for these larger population centers in 2015 (SB 5322).

Recommendations:

- Pursue base-funding of \$350,000 (maximum) per district to support critical and stable operations. This is the cost for 3 FTEs (District Manager, Finance Manager, Conservation Planner) and overhead (rent, computers, insurance, audits, travel, telecommunications etc.). Funding would be requested through the State's Operating Budget.
- Encourage CD supervisors to pursue rates and charges where feasible. Hold workshops and/or webinars on the benefits and importance of local funding.
- The WACD BOD should authorize and direct its executive staff to work with Association lobbyists and the SCC to create a strategy for achieving long-term sustainable funding for WACD BOD approval.
- Work with WACD BOD, lobbyists and the SCC to remove or raise the cap on rates and charges. At the very least, adjust for inflation to \$10.14.



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#2 Increasing legislative and state funding support for the SCC & CDs

A long-term strategy will require:

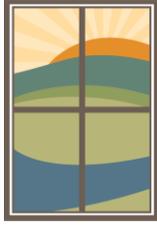
- Increasing WACD lobbying to:
 - Increase direct state appropriation to the SCC and CDs.
 - Include CDs and the SCC in budget provisos and bill language.
- Strategically pursue new opportunities for program funding (e.g., stormwater and flood protection; fire risk reduction; fish passage barrier removals etc.).
- Establish protocol for inclusion of CDs and the SCC in state agency decisions regarding fund distribution based on state statutes and/or policy.
- Development of a clearly-defined, multi-year legislative agenda and work more closely with resource partners, including WSCC.

The Challenge:

- The voluntary stewardship approach is not formally recognized in water quality and other important statutes.
- State funding for natural resource work has remained stagnant for over a decade.
- Agencies are reluctant to include CDs or the SCC in funding decisions, or they have competing demands for funding.
- There is a high degree of resistance to increasing local or state taxes in general and within the CD community.

Recommendations:

- Research and write a White Paper on the economic and environmental benefits of the incentive-based approach to water pollution prevention.
- Help establish a Conservation Caucus in the legislature.
- Transform the SCC decision making body to champion inclusion of the SCC and CDs in state agency decisions and fund distribution.
- Increase the capacity of the SCC and CDs to engage with resource partners in watershed planning and effectiveness monitoring through stronger science-based programs and services.



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Suggested conversation starter with WACD Board Member:

- Do you believe your CD has all the resources necessary to do its core mission? If you were to guess, how much additional funding do you think the CD needs to cover basic functions?
- Are you supportive of these recommendations? Why or why not?