



# Washington Association of Conservation Districts

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Dear Senators and Representatives,

Thank you for supporting conservation districts and the State Conservation Commission in developing the FY21-23 Operating and Capital Budgets this session. As you approach this final step of reconciliation, the Washington Association of Conservation Districts wishes to share our priorities for your consideration as you work out budget differences.

WACD's top priority is the \$5 million in **Conservation Technical Assistance** funding as included in the Senate's operating budget. CTA ensures conservation districts have the capacity to provide the support and service their customers need, including: financial assistance; engineering project designs; assistance navigating permitting processes; and other services that empower landowners and others to conserve natural resources. This funding will help reduce the backlog of individuals and groups requesting district assistance, to wit: 800 Washington farms needing a farm plans; 350 plus conservation projects waiting on engineering and design services; and more than 2,000 potential restoration sites waiting for consultation and evaluation.

An additional priority is the **\$3 million wildfire recovery proviso** for the State Conservation Commission in the adopted House operating budget. After the fires of 2020, conservation districts collected potential landowner recovery needs of more than \$21 million. This amount is achievable based on the capacity of districts as part of the larger recovery effort.

Another priority is to fund the **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)** in the amount of \$6.25 million to continue salmon and riparian habitat recovery momentum among private landowners. CREP leverages federal dollars with only a 20% state match required, meaning every state dollar adds four federal dollars. This generates exponential ripple effects. According to the OFM Model for Impact Analysis, \$6 million in state funding for CREP will create 381 jobs over the next two years and generate over \$19 million in labor income.

Among our other State Conservation Commission budget priorities:

- WACD supports the House's version of funding \$7 million in RCPP projects in the capital budget.
- WACD supports the Senate's capital budget amount of \$4 million in Irrigation Efficiency funding.
- WACD supports the Senate's version of providing \$4 million in Natural Resource Investment capital budget funding.
- WACD supports the Senate's version of providing \$4 million in Shellfish capital budget funding.

Very sincerely,

Tom Salzer, WACD Executive Director