



5-Year Plan (2020 to 2025)

Columbia Conservation District

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Organization of the Columbia Conservation District

- Established June 29, 1949 as a political subdivision of the State of Washington with authorities and structure outlined in Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 89.08.

Function of the Columbia Conservation District

- To take available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land manager with conservation of soil, water and related natural resources.

We Serve & Why

- The people who own, manage, or utilize the natural resources.

Mission of the Columbia Conservation District

- “Mission of Columbia Conservation District is to provide the needed support to people who own, manage, or utilize the natural resources so their activities will enhance the region’s natural resources while ensuring the quality of life & culture these resources provide.”

Vision of the Columbia Conservation District

- Columbia County residents will be enabled to implement stewardship of our natural resources through voluntary practices without compromise to economic viability or social standards of the region.

Values of the Columbia Conservation District

- 1) To protect private property rights and value people and their properties above other resources.
- 2) To promote economically feasible conservation practices in Columbia County that ensure minimum soil erosion and acceptable air and water quality standards to meet the needs of agriculture and other consumers, while protecting the future for our youth.
- 3) An entity that supports and protects the land manager.
- 4) To promote continued voluntary participation of landowners and operators as cooperators in this Conservation District. Each operator is encouraged to develop a viable and effective resource management plan.
- 5) To monitor proposed land conversion from agricultural purposes in order to ensure compliance with the intent of the Columbia County Comprehensive plan and be a communicator when changes are made and related natural resource impacts.
- 6) To operate and supervise Columbia County conservation efforts in a way that emphasizes local control and avoids over-regulation of state or federal agencies.
- 7) To explore funding sources to provide enough revenue to offset current and anticipated future expenditures for District operations, services, programs and projects.

Natural Resource Data & Information:

- The District encompasses all of Columbia County. Of the 556,160 total acres: 373,768 acres are managed by private landowners/operators; 181,162 are public lands (USFS, BPA, CTUIR, WDFW & WDNR); and 1,230 acres are within communities.

Trends

- Soil and water quality issues are more numerous than programs and research available to help address them
- Some producers are exchanging field burning for straw removal and/or mechanical straw management
- Direct seed helping to reduce tillage
- Recognize an increase in non-inversion tillage
- Economic uncertainty slows conversion to conservation management practices
- Cost of production and crop insurances impacting cropping decisions and conservation practice application
- Government payments are necessary as part of the rural economy
- Practices with public benefit needing cost share from public – more consistency needed in the system – should not be a make-money scheme
- Watershed planning goals have been developed with landowner, producer and regional technical team (RTT) and citizen involvement – acceptance of upland planning in four watershed plans with specifics in each watershed
- Multiple – regional scale projects and planning efforts – our county is split between three WRIAs – regional salmon recovery efforts – moved from our district boundaries to regional boundaries
- Salmon recovery is a driving force – fish related funding sources
- Enhancement of fish habitat
- Be a Go-between land managers and regulatory agencies
- Regulatory burdens and changes will increase
- Cultural resources is a monster and will continue to delay timely resource work
- Good working relationship between district board, WACD Committees, WSCC regarding policy development
- Local Work Group process taking steps backwards regarding taking seriously the recommendations of local implementers and the withholding of funding for special initiatives
- New technology impacting residue management
- Increasing renewable energies
- Growth of the district programs
- Voluntary programs/incentives are needed
- More information technology available for sharing capabilities
- Production ag operations are increasing in size
- Small acreage operations have been struggling
- Local students do not have a strong connection with agriculture
- Local FFA program is strengthen
- Increase in technology in the field
- Need for connection with city and urban folks
- New pulp mill at Lyons ferry and impact on straw removal

Criteria for Selecting Conservation Priorities:

- Address's an identified resource concern and/or trend
 - Address's a public identified resource concern(s)
 - Works to sustain Columbia County's agriculture-based economy
 - Possibility and available funding source
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Priority Natural Resource Conservation Needs & Geographic Areas, Measures of Success and Goals:

Water Quality & Quantity (Tucannon & Touchet projects, salmon recovery projects, water quality, ground water issues including shallow wells, nitrates & human health, benefits from salmon recovery projects including flood protection, Lakes project, flood plain management) (confined animals, nutrient levels, TMDLs, practices application, residue management)

Goal: By February 2025 have a demonstrated reduction in Ecology referrals, an increase in number of practices implemented, an increase in number of land managers served, and improvements in water quality & flow.

Measure:

- Seek funding for Touchet River projects
- Tucannon Recovery projects
- Livestock operations assistance...from producer input (different than Ecology grant)
- Continue VSP implementation activities
- reduction in Ecology referrals
- number of practices implemented
- number of land managers served
- water quality & flow improvements

Geographic Area: Active agriculture management acreage

Soil Quality & Conservation (Chemistry, Research & Erosion, Nutrient management, education to next generation, cover crops, long term effect of residue removal, micronutrients, soil health, change in rotation), (nutrient management, organic matter, microbial health, infiltration, erosion control)

Goal: By February 2025 increase acres with improved; soil nutrient management balance (nutrient indicator levels, pH, soil quality (organic matter, infiltration, and biological activity), soil and water retention (minimal visible erosion) and implementation of conservation systems.

Measure:

- Pursue research on micros, cover crops, above
- Follow-up on current soil health projects, share results
- Pursue remote sensing technology services
- acres with improved soil quality (organic matter, infiltration, biological activity, nutrient balance, pH)
- reduction in visible erosion (annual & timing of field review)
- acres in conservation systems, CRP and Farm Bill work through TSP
- encourage cover crop usage

Geographic Area: Active agriculture crop acreage

Community Outreach (minimalize negative effects, information about agriculture, feature articles, website, soils and people, annual or informational meetings for other audiences, high school education and projects)

Goal: By February 2025 increase in the numbers of producers practicing conservation on the ground (plans & implementation) and in the number of people/publics actively involved with the conservation district.

Measure:

- Pesticide credits, districts capacity, and timing for agriculture meetings...growers needs changing...reach younger generation of farmers (different way to reach)
- Social media use (announcements by email and/or text to 80 producers)
- Demonstration projects for agriculture (research, soil health)
- Develop the strategy for showing the great stuff about Columbia agriculture to the rest of Columbia County residents...Facebook (student), Website, Articles, tours, Chamber Commerce email service, Dayton Boosters,
- Look for existing communication system to send messages to publics (weed board) not to duplicate
- Have staff capacity to develop and host a website

Air Quality (continuation on burned areas, burn permits, air quality issues from neighbors, wind erosion, health concerns) (reduced emissions, PM 2.5 levels, dust)

Goal: By February 2025 increase utilization of minimum tillage management practices while managing field burning.

Measure:

- Technical assistance (leaving enough cover on soil surface – dependent on tillage program)
- Burn alternatives through residue/straw use
- Manage burn program
- Number of practices implemented
- Number of land managers served
- Reduction in acres burned

Geographic Area: Active agriculture crop acreage

Forest, Range, and Fire Management (CWPP planning with County, Forest Stewardship Plans) (invasive species, noxious weeds, fuel reduction)

Goal: By February 2025 have a demonstrated increase in number of practices implemented, the number of land managers served and a reduction in acres burned.

Measure:

- Work with county on technical aspects of Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and Fire Wise
- Including technical work on VSP implementation
- Acres of forest, range implementing fire management practices
- Acres of forest and range implementing practices to reduce invasive species and noxious weeds forest, range and/or fuel reduction plans developed
- Number of land managers served

Geographic Area: County

Production Agriculture Economics (viable agriculture operations, understanding falling numbers, support alternative uses of straw & residue management)

Goal: By 2025 will have demonstrated improvement in production agriculture economic condition in Columbia County

Measure:

- Number of producers retained in production agriculture
- Return on investments for new technologies implemented
- Comparative costs of alternatives
- VSP economic viability indicators
- Support WAWG and Wheat Commission outreach on falling numbers

Geographic Area: County

Wildlife Impacts on Production Agriculture (crop damage, livestock predation, water availability, ESA recovery impacts)

Goal: By February 2025 have an increase in habitat recovery while recognizing a decrease in dollars lost from wildlife impacts and acreage lost from production agriculture.

Measure:

- Dollars lost from wildlife impacts
- Acres of habitat protected and enhanced
- Acreage lost from production agriculture
- Reduction in invasive species

Geographic Area: County

Renewable Energy & Biomass Alternatives (biodiesel, ethanol, solar, wind, straw & forest products)

Goal: By February 2025 seek programs to assist landowners/producers in the utilization of natural resources for alternative energy production and efficiencies.

Measure:

- Number of landowner/managers served
- Number of programs reviewed for potential implementation
- Economic impact of the energy and biomass alternatives

Geographic Area: County

Information – Education & District Operations Priorities, Measures of Success, and Goals:

Leadership to New Generation Conservation (education, outreach, visionary, on-ground conservation implementation & demonstration)

Goal: By February 2025 increase acres of conservation on the ground (plans & implementation) and in the number of people/publics actively involved with the conservation district.

Measure:

- Numbers of acres of conservation on the ground (plans & implementation)
- Numbers of people/public actively working with the conservation district
- Tours, demonstrations, annual grower meeting
- Youth education: soil stewardship & Camp Wooten
- Fair booth
- WWCC new Coop Program Partnership
- Joint program with FFA
- Media exposure

District Operations & Cost Share

Goal: By February 2025 ensure effective and efficient operations and steady increase in cost share for on ground conservation work, the number of people served, and the number of conservation practices implemented.

Measure:

- Dollars for on ground conservation work
- Number of people served
- Number of conservation practices implemented
- District operations operated effectively and efficiently
- Grant administrative requirements performed effectively and on time
- Commission operational requests/requirements met on time
- Staff maintain professional skill levels through training

Land Manager Needs

- Technical and cost share assistance to implement natural resource management systems (production Ag, small acreage owners, water conveyance).
- Maintain viability of the family farm to remain in business.
- The District to buffer regulatory impacts and requirements.

Milestones, Timeline & Actions

Water Quality & Quantity (confined animals, nutrient levels, TMDLs, water management)

Measurable Goal:

By February 2025 have a demonstrated reduction in Ecology referrals, an increase in number of practices implemented, an increase in number of land managers served, and improvements in water quality & flow.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Number of river habitat projects	Annually	Implementation of projects Manage funding sources
Reduction in Ecology referrals	Annually	Provide technical assistance and/or cost share to referrals.
VSP implementation	By January 2025	Provide technical assistance for landowners/operators to develop VSP conservation plans
Landowner/Operators Conservation Plans Implemented	Annually	Implementation of VSP Conservation Plan actions
Landowners served	Annually	Numbers of technical assistance and/or cost share contracts developed & implemented Annual meeting and tour – cooperator participation
Number of Practice implementation	Annually	Seek cost share funding
Water quality and flow improvements	February 2025	TMDL classifications by Ecology Amount of water placed in “trust” Practice implementation addressing TMDL implementation plan

Soil Quality & Conservation (nutrient management, organic matter, microbial health, infiltration, erosion control)

Measurable Goal:

By February 2025 increase acres with improved; soil nutrient management balance (nutrient indicator levels, pH, soil quality (organic matter, infiltration, and biological activity), soil and water retention (minimal visible erosion) and implementation of conservation systems.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Continue research on soil health focusing on pH and micro-nutrient levels	March 2020 thru August 2025	Conduct soil samples Add soil amendments Take yield samples Analyze data including economic viability Apply corrective measures
Share soil health data analysis	Annually	Disseminate data and results at grower meetings, tours, field days, etc.
Cover crop usage	Annually	Economic viability Time of rotation
Farm Bill work with NRCS CRP and Farm Bill work through TSP	Annually	CRP quality checks CRP plan development
Reemphasize/educate producers on the economy and conservation of minimum tillage systems	Annually	Revisit conservation BMPs with emphasis on economic and soil health
Number of Practices implementation	Annually	Seek cost share funding
Assist producers to obtain conservation tillage implements/machinery	Annually	Utilize inter-district agreement with SCD for state revolving fund loans

Community Outreach (minimalize negative effects, information about agriculture, feature articles, website, soils and people, annual or informational meetings for other audiences, high school education and projects)

Measurable Goal:

By February 2025 increase in the numbers of producers practicing conservation on the ground (plans & implementation) and in the number of people/publics actively involved with the conservation district.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Number of young producers engaged in conservation	Annually	Personal contacts to determine needs
Explore the use of Social Media	By February 2025	Use social media to reach young producers Reach out to non-ag community
Use existing outreach systems	Annually	Partner with other entities to communicate conservation efforts and potential
Explore development of a website	Annually	Have staff capacity to develop and maintain a website

Air Quality (continuation on burned areas, burn permits, air quality issues from neighbors, wind erosion, health concerns) (reduced emissions, PM 2.5 levels, dust)

Measurable Goal:

By February 2025 increase utilization of minimum tillage management practices while managing field burning.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Reemphasize/educate producers on the economy and conservation of minimum tillage systems	Annually	Present burn & till education
Assist producers to obtain conservation tillage implements/machinery	Annually	Utilize inter-district agreement with SCD for state revolving fund loans

Forest, Range, and Fire Management (invasive species, noxious weeds, fuel reduction, CWPP, CRM)

Measurable Goal:

By February 2025 have a demonstrated increase in number of practices implemented, the number of land managers served and a reduction in acres with high fire risk.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Fire reduction management plans on range and forest acreage	Annually	Provide technical assistance to landowners
Producer education	Annually	Partner with federal & state agencies to offer educational activities (tours, field days)
Reduce invasive species impacts	Annually	Partner with Columbia County Noxious Weed Board in working to reduce invasive species
Find funding	2025	Find cost share programs to implement plans

Production Agriculture Economics (viable agriculture operations, understanding falling numbers, support alternative uses of straw & residue management)

Measurable Goal:

By 2025 will have demonstrated improvement in production agriculture economic condition in Columbia County

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Number of producers retained in production ag.	February 2025	Provide technical assistance
Monitor economic return on modern technologies	Annually	Compare costs of alternatives
Economic viability a part of VSP	Annually	Work with county and producers to insure VSP requirements are economically viable
Outreach on Falling number	2025	Support WAWA and Wheat Commission

Wildlife Habitat and Impacts on Production Agriculture (crop damage, livestock predation, water availability, ESA recovery impacts)

Measurable Goal:

By February 2025 have an increase in habitat recovery while recognizing a decrease in dollars lost from wildlife impacts and acreage lost from production agriculture.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Improve wildlife habitat	February 2025	Implement habitat projects without taking away from production acres
Number of Practice implementation	Annually	Seek cost share funding
Work with state fish and wildlife agencies	Annually	Control and habitat activities

Renewable Energy & Biomass Alternatives (biodiesel, ethanol, solar, wind, straw & forest products)

Measurable Goal:

By February 2025 seek programs to assist landowners/producers in the utilization of natural resources for alternative energy production and efficiencies.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Assist landowners to develop alternative natural resource base energy sources	annually	Disseminate information
Monitor programs adaptable to local conditions	annually	Review potential funding
Seek potential project implementation funding	2025	Pursue funding

Leadership to New Generation Conservation (education, outreach, visionary, on-ground conservation implementation & demonstration)

Measurable Goal:

By February 2025 increase acres of conservation on the ground (plans & implementation) and in the number of people/publics actively involved with the conservation district.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Increase number of producers applying conservation systems	2025	Conduct annual grower workshop, practice tours and demonstration projects.
Increase public awareness of current agriculture practice	Annually	Fair booth, presentations, grower meetings, increase electronic media usage
Increase youth understanding of natural resources	Annually	Soil stewardship, Orca/water quality/ salmon education in the classroom & 6 th grade camp
WWCC Coop Program Partnership	Annually	Provide intern, senior project opportunities to WWCC students
Assist with High School FFA education	Annually	Work on joint programs and provide on hands educational opportunities
Increase the number of people involved with district programs	Annually	Conduct education/outreach activities soliciting public involvement

District Operations & Cost Share

Measurable Goal:

By February 2025 ensure effective and efficient operations and steady increase in cost share for on ground conservation work, the number of people served, and the number of conservation practices implemented.

Milestones	Timeline	12 Month Actions
Increase funding for on-the-ground project implementation	2025	Seek funding source to implement natural resource priorities
Project implemented	Annually	Efficiently manage project implementation
Effective and efficient management	Annually	Operate district professionally to meet Commission administrative and legal requirements
Grant Administration	Annually	Manage grant implementation efficiently, within budget and on time.
Proficient and trained staff	Annually	Ensure staff continually improves skills to affect productive district operations and project management

Staffing Needs

- *Enter a summary of the staff positions needed to carry out the plan of the Columbia Conservation District based on the above information.*
 - District Manager
 - Fiscal Manager/Administrative Assistant
 - Program Manager/District Assistant
 - Cluster Engineer (part-time)
 - Program & Project Planner/Manager
 - Resource Technician
 - Biological & Technical Consultant (contract basis)
 - Engineering (contract basis).

Annual Budget Needs

▪ *Enter a summary of the annual budget needed to carry out the plan of the Columbia Conservation District based on the above information.*

▪ <i>Salary & Benefits</i>	\$ 230,000
▪ <i>Contract Services</i>	\$ 51,000
▪ <i>Equipment</i>	\$ 6,200
▪ <i>Office Supplies</i>	\$ 3,200
▪ <i>Materials</i>	\$ 2,900
▪ <i>Programs & Cost Share</i>	\$1,200,000
▪ <i>Rent & Utilities & Communication</i>	\$ 15,800
▪ <i>Transportation</i>	\$ 12,000
▪ <i>Training</i>	\$ 4,050
▪ <i>Other (WACD & NACD dues)</i>	<u>\$ 5,300</u>
▪ <i>Total Annual Budget Need</i>	<i>\$1,530,450</i>

Key Decision Makers

▪ *Enter a summary of the key decision makers needed to carry out the plan of the Columbia Conservation District based on the above information.*

▪ 16 th District elected officials	Secretary of Agriculture	NW Planning Council
▪ Members of Congress and Staff	BPA	County Commissioners
▪ WSCC	Cooperating Agencies – local, state, federal, tribal	
▪ WACD	Land Managers/Owners	USDA NRCS & FSA

Washington Conservation Districts assisting land managers with their conservation choices

