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WALLA WALLA COUNTY
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
ESTABLISHED 1941

Walla Walla County Conservation District



Annual Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2026

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Mission

The Walla Walla County Conservation District works to conserve and enhance natural resources in the county through voluntary participation and education.

Natural Resource Priorities

Most of Walla Walla County land is in private ownership. As a result, WWCCD tends to work with agricultural landowners. The Natural Resources Priorities described below have been identified as state, regional and local priorities through various agencies. These agencies include but are not limited to Washington Dept. of Ecology, Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, NRCS Snake River Local Working Group, Walla Walla County, Snake River Salmon Recovery Office and area non-profit organizations. Priorities often overlap and are defined in detail in numerous TMDL reports, several geomorphic assessments on local waterways, the WW Co VSP plan, WW Subbasin Plan, WW Watershed Plan, several USACE flood assessment plans, WW Co Hazard Mitigation Plans, WW Co Community Wildfire Protection Plan and other documents.

- Soil Health
 - Organic matter depletion, nutrient loss and compaction have reduced the health and agronomic use of soils. A baseline for soil health is unknown. It is known that pH levels in soils have fallen to dangerously acidic levels. The WWCCD commits to working with the USDA-NRCS, WSU Extension, and OSU Extension to increase soil health awareness.
- Air Quality
 - Nearly 94% of Walla Walla County acres are mapped as within a “moderate” to “very high” wind erosion potential which is more severe in the west portion of the county adjacent to the Columbia and Snake Rivers exceeding 10ppm of particulate matter. Walla Walla County, WA-Ecology, USDA NRCS and USDA FSA are working to address these concerns. Encouraging best management practices related to conservation cover and agricultural burning can reduce particulate matter and address air quality concerns.
- Water Quantity
 - Municipal and irrigation withdraws and changing climate conditions have resulted in declining aquifers and instream flows. Several waterways also have “gaining” or “losing” reaches making it challenging to identify the factor related to declining conditions. Installing irrigation efficiency projects, monitoring water use and collaborating with area partners are part of WWCCD’s strategy to address water quantity concerns.
- Water Quality
 - Numerous TMDL reports and the Salmon Limiting Factors Report have identified water quality concerns. Establishing and maintaining riparian buffers, facilitating improvements with livestock producers, reducing erosion and restoring waterways to their natural function are ways to protect and enhance water quality.
- Critical areas and wildlife protection
 - This resource is described in the WWCCD 5-year plan as Fisheries, Range & Pasture, Wetland Resources, and Forest Health. Critical areas include Fish and Wildlife Habitat, Wetlands, Frequently Flooded areas, Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas, and Geologic Hazardous areas. Components of each are described in other resource priorities, below.

Program Areas

There are two program areas: natural resource programs and district programs.

- **Natural Resource Programs** are those intended to address specific, identified natural resource concerns in the district area.
- **District Programs** are those supporting basic district operations, education and outreach with landowners, engagement with other processes and entities to advance the work of the district,

etc. Both program area activities relate to the district's long-term goals as stated in the 5-year plan.

Natural Resource Programs

Soil Health

Goal(s): Increase soil health in Walla Walla County (pH, organic matter, carbon level, nutrients, etc).

Natural Resource Measurable Result Objective: Education of soil health will increase.

Programmatic Measurable Result Objective: Host 2 soil health focused workshops. Develop cost share opportunities focused on soil health practices.

Funding Source(s): State Conservation Commission, landowner fees

Activities for FY2026	Target Dates	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding	Notes
Promote soil testing and soil health practices	Ongoing	4	10,000	SCC Implementation
Coordinate rental of no-till drill (Dewdrop) with area producers	Ongoing	4	1500	Fees

Air Quality

Goal(s): Reduce air pollutants by processing Agricultural Burn Permit applications in Walla Walla County.

Natural Resource Measurable Result Objective: Agricultural burn related air quality particulates will be reduced over time.

Programmatic Measurable Result Objective: Landowners (25 to 70) will be guided through the agricultural burn permit Best Management Practices and permit applications resulting in a reduction of burn related air quality particulates.

Funding Source(s): State Conservation Commission, Washington Dept. of Ecology contract with Walla Walla County

Activities for FY2026	Target Dates	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding	Notes
Process agricultural burn permit applications. Attend Ag Burn Task Force meetings. Provide technical assistance in Best Management Practices regarding tillage and air quality.	Ongoing	80	25,000	Ecology/ Walla Walla County contract

Water Quantity

Goal: Assist with restoring flow in Walla Walla area waterways.

Funding Source(s): Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC)

Activities for FY2025	Target Dates	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding	Notes
Assist landowners in developing on-farm irrigation efficiencies projects.	On-going	30	5,000	SCC Irrigation Efficiency
Work with engineering firm to finalize plans for the Gardena Farms District #13 upper canal	Through June 2028	50	113,000	US Bureau of Reclamation, SCC Irr Eff.
Work with the partners to improve water management (WW 2050 Basin Advisory Committee and others).	On-going	10	6,000	SCC Irrigation Efficiency
Work with hired consultant to create a Drought Preparedness Plan	Through Nov. 2027	50	217,000	Ecology
Promote low water-use landscaping through the Heritage Garden Program.	Through June 2026	2	5000	Ecology Office of Columbia River & SCC Implementation

Water Quality

Goal(s): Reduce pollutants to waters of Walla Walla

Natural Resource Measurable Result Objective:
Install 5 acres or 1 mile of riparian buffer.

Programmatic Measurable Result Objective: Work with Walla Walla landowners and conservation partners to remove Walla Walla streams and rivers from the 303d list by planting and maintaining riparian forest buffers on 85% of eligible streambanks, controlling invasive noxious weeds, and restoring natural river function to area rivers and streams.

Funding Source(s): Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC), Walla Walla County, Dept. of Ecology, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), USDA Farm Service Agency & Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Washington State Dept. of Agriculture (WSDA)

Activities for FY2026	Target Dates	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding	Notes
Maintain and monitor current enrollment of ~2,500 acres and about 110 contracts. Assess 2 expiring contracts for re-enrollment, protecting 10–15-year-old buffers. Conduct mid-management reviews on 20 CREP contracts	On-going	215	155,000	SCC CREP TA and project costs

Develop and install two riparian forest buffers along the Walla Walla River (Swegle and McDonald)	Through June 2029	200	220,000	RCO: Riparian cost through June 2026 only
Seek funds for riparian buffers not eligible for CREP.	Ongoing	25	10,000	SCC Implementation
Develop and install riparian forest buffers along waterways	Ongoing	60	15,000	NRI, Ecology THA
Coordinate with livestock producers on water quality concerns. Address erosion to streams and fields from natural disasters which impact water quality.	Ongoing	2	5,000	SCC Implementation

Critical areas & Wildlife Protection

Goal(s): Increase stability of fish and wildlife populations and protect/enhance habitats

Natural Resource Measurable Result Objective: Remove one fish barrier/install one fish screen per year in Walla Walla County. Assess critical area function and needs within Walla Walla County.

Programmatic Measurable Result Objective: Design one fish related barrier removal or fish screen project annually. Develop farm plans at the request of landowners to address critical area concerns on their property.

Funding Source(s): Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC), Walla Walla County, WA State Dept. of Ecology, Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO): Snake River Salmon Recovery Office, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), WA State Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) and private mitigation funds

Activities for FY2026	Target Dates	Time (Days) Required	Estimated Funding	Notes
Lead the Voluntary Stewardship Program including monitoring, developing VSP focused farm plans, and cost-share projects.	On-going	240	115,000	Walla Walla County contract
Advance design and bid documents for lower Mill Creek (Wallula Avenue to Bunchgrass Lane)	Through June 2026	80	125,000	ECY cost through June 2026 only. Installation may be July-Sept 2026
Advance design and bid documents for Touchet River RM 35	Through Dec. 2027	80	120,000	RCO, ECY cost through June 2025 only. Installation will be July-Sept 2025
Monitor construction of the Touchet River RM 42 restoration project	Through June 2026	80	790,000	RCO, ECY cost through June 2025 only. Installation will be July-Sept 2025
Monitor construction of the Walla Walla River Bridge to Bridge project Phase 3a and another project (TBD)	Through Oct. 2026	80	90,000	SCC Natural Resource Investments
Seek funds for in-stream restoration and flood mitigation projects on the Touchet River, Walla Walla River, Mill Creek and tributaries.	Ongoing	70	35,000	SCC Implementation

Complete status reviews of CRP fields or CSP contracts	Through Sept. 2026	50	5,000	NRCS Task Order
Coordinate on advancing the Touchet/Tucannon levee group	Through Dec. 2027	50	250,000	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

District Programs

Education and Outreach

Goal(s): Continue providing technical assistance to the Walla Walla County community. Share progress on restoration efforts and participate in regional planning forums.

Programmatic Measurable Result Objective:

Education and outreach program will include 1) maintaining publications including website, quarterly newsletters and 2) conducting farmer mini-sessions, workshop and/or tour. Outreach will educate engage 30 landowners annually.

Funding Source(s): Washington State Conservation Commission: Implementation; Snake River Salmon Recovery Office: Lead Entity (LE), other Conservation Districts, and WSU.

Activities for FY2025	Target Dates	Days Required	Estimated Funding	Notes
Meet statutory requirements of RCW 89.08: conduct audits, fiscal management, commission reporting, and management.	Ongoing	125	112,000	SCC Implementation & Overhead
Maintain skills of WWCCD staff through trainings (WADE, SAO, NRCS, etc.)	Ongoing	4 to 10 each	10,000	SCC Implementation
Inform the public of the WWCCD mission through a quarterly newsletter (650 subscribers), website, meetings, and/or tours.	Ongoing	25	10000	SCC Implementation
Educate area youth and landowners through community events (Wheat Week, Fair, Return-to-the-River Event)	On-going	20	25,500	SCC Implementation, LE, other CDs
Participate in regional Lead Entity Committee/Regional Technical Team/Snake River Salmon Recovery Board activities.	On-going	15	4000	LE

Budget

Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026)

<u>Revenues</u>		
Project		Salary plus project cost share
SCC (Implementation, Irrigation Efficiency, Natural Resource Investments)		326,000
SCC-CREP		155,000
SCC/Walla Walla Co.-Voluntary Stewardship Program		115,000
Priority Projects (Dry Creek, Drought Plan, Lower Mill Creek, Touchet 42, Touchet 35, WW River Riparian, Touchet Levee Group)		1,840,000
Snake River Salmon Recovery Board Lead Entity		4,500
Ecology/ Walla Walla Co. MOU for Burn Permit		25,000
Fees, Other CDs, NRCS (Task Orders)		13,500
Total Revenue:		2,479,000
<u>Expenses and Other Uses</u>		
Description		FY26 Expenses
SCC and Priority Projects		1,878,400
Wages & Benefits: 7 FT+ 1PT employees		527,800
General Office Expenses & Employment taxes		111,280
		2,517,480

