

Demonstrated Expertise Supporting Viable Working Lands



Irrigation Efficiencies Grant Program

- ▶ Provides financial assistance to water right holders who upgrade to more efficient irrigation systems.
- ▶ Today, over 17,000 acre feet of water per year is saved and returned to drought-prone streams.
- ▶ In addition to saving water, irrigators save time, money, and energy with more efficient systems.

Vets on the Farm

- ▶ Launched by Spokane Conservation District, helps soldiers transition from military life to civilian life by connecting them to agricultural-based employment.
- ▶ Provides farmer-mentors, education and training, and low-risk opportunities for veterans to work on a demonstration farm.
- ▶ Expanded to six counties and helped around 200 veterans since 2015.

SCC Office of Farmland Preservation

- ▶ Works to address the loss of working farms and forest land in our state.
- ▶ Provides resources for farm transition planning, food policy, and for community efforts to retain farmland.
- ▶ Supports and sponsors agricultural conservation easements, including one in partnership with North Yakima Conservation District in 2018 that protects 283 acres of irrigated farmland in the Cowlitz Basin.

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Taking action to address our state's critical resource issues



VIABLE WORKING LANDS

The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) and conservation districts deliver tools that strengthen farmland preservation, food security, and our agricultural economy.

- ▶ The farming industry looks to the SCC and conservation districts for tools that will help them thrive, even as they face issues that threaten the viability of agriculture in Washington.
- ▶ Pressure to develop farmland is high. And — as more farmers approach retirement — more resources are needed to support farm succession planning and new and beginning farmers.
- ▶ With additional capacity, the SCC and conservation districts could more broadly share comprehensive solutions that preserve farmland, foster responsible land management, and spark the next generation of growers.



**The Washington State Conservation Commission
2019-21 budget request supports this work.**

SCC Decision Packages that Support Viable Working Lands:

Operating

CONSERVATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE - \$17,134,000

- ▶ Increases conservation district (CD) capacity to deliver farm-friendly solutions that address critical natural resource issues and respond to a growing list of working land managers waiting for voluntary conservation services.
- ▶ This will increase implementation of voluntary conservation projects by 30% statewide, including many on farmland.

WORKING LANDS - \$1,648,000

- ▶ Strengthens farmland viability in Washington by: 1) engaging veterans to become farmers; 2) creating new economic opportunities for small farms; 3) improving strategic planning for local farmland preservation; and, 4) boosting on-farm energy efficiency.

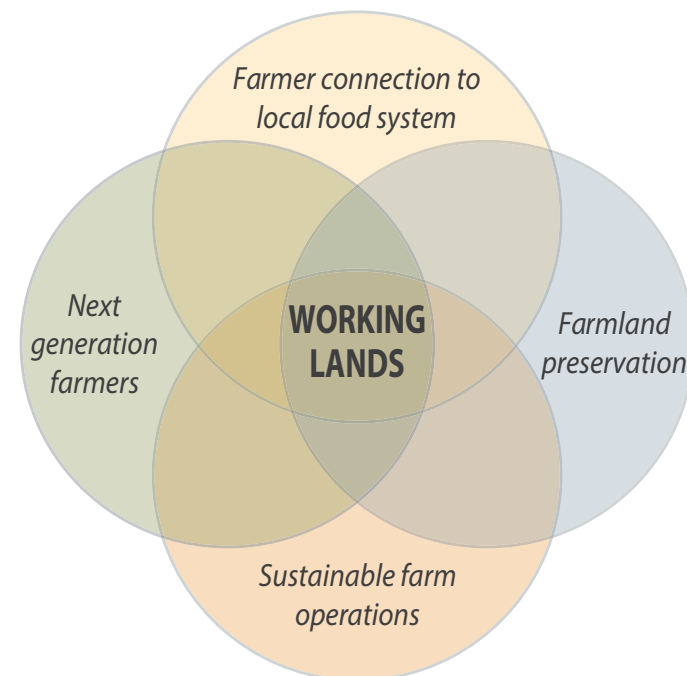
VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (VSP) - \$9,925,000

- ▶ Ensures the successful implementation of county VSP work plans, including monitoring and reporting on the results of this work. Funded activities will protect critical areas and the viability of Washington's agriculture.
- ▶ Includes funding for 12 non-VSP counties to implement similar programs that protect critical areas.

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION SCIENCE PROGRAM - \$3,975,000

- ▶ Supports an Agricultural Conservation Science Program at the SCC. The SCC will coordinate with agencies, universities, and other partners to ensure applicable research findings are put into practice on the ground.
- ▶ CD employee certification/training programs will be expanded.
- ▶ Supports research on soil health, dairy distillation, pollutant tracking, and water quality trading.

How Do the SCC and Conservation Districts Address Working Lands?



We address the future of farming through a variety of tools.

Our approach is designed to address four key components that have been identified by the SCC Office of Farmland Preservation as contributing factors to the loss of farmland in our state and areas of opportunity to advance agricultural viability.

Capital

MATCH FOR REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP) - \$11,800,000

- ▶ Provides state match required in order to receive over \$30 million federal dollars for seven RCPP projects in Washington.
- ▶ Projects will generate hundreds of jobs and tackle priority natural resource issues in targeted geographic areas, including preserving the ecosystem benefits of farmland.

IRRIGATION EFFICIENCIES - \$8,906,000

- ▶ Provides grant funding to assist water right holders with increasing the efficiency of their on-farm irrigation systems.
- ▶ Saved water is returned to drought-prone streams that are home to ESA-listed fish species without risk of relinquishing water rights.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION - \$12,031,000

- ▶ Takes a geographic-based approach to preserving farmland through a variety of techniques, including acquisition of farmland easements.
- ▶ Blocks of farmland will be protected with multiple owners in order to maintain a critical mass of working farms within a project area.



What Makes Investing in Viable Working Lands Important for Washington?



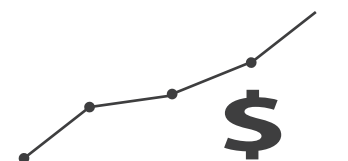
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average age of principal farm operator in Washington



400,000

acres of farmland lost in Washington between 2005-2015



\$49 Billion

economic impact of Washington's agriculture industry