5-Year Plan (2017 to 2022) (4.4.17 DRAFT)
Whidbey Island Conservation District

For More Information Contact: Karen Bishop;
(360) 678-4708; karen@whidbeycd.org

Organization of the Whidbey Island Conservation District

The Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD) was organized on June 21, 1967 as a political subdivision of the State of Washington, operating under the authorities, powers and structure contained in RCW 89.08. The District serves Whidbey Island and is governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors. The Board is composed of three elected positions and two positions appointed by the WA State Conservation Commission (WSCC).

Function of the Whidbey Island Conservation District

To make 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.

Mission of the Whidbey Island Conservation District

The mission of the Whidbey Island Conservation District is to assist the management of natural resources on and around Whidbey Island for present and future generations, inspiring voluntary conservation practices.

Vision of the Whidbey Island Conservation District

- Recognized as the most effective natural resource conservation organization.
- Consistent and sustainable funding.
- Satisfied customers and employees working in partnership.

Values of the Whidbey Island Conservation District

Community service and improvement of natural resources through education, voluntary stewardship, cooperation, and implementation of conservation practices on the ground.

Natural Resource Data & Information:

The district relies on information, data, and best available science from sources such as those listed in Attachment 3.

Key Decision Makers:

- The landowners, land managers and residents of Whidbey Island and beyond are key decision makers because their daily management decisions affect the condition of natural resources on a daily basis. The WICD Board of Supervisors is a key decision maker in how WICD resources are allocated. WICD is committed to working with our diverse group of partners and supporting organizations to help carry out the mission and goals of the District.

Criteria for Selecting Conservation Priorities:

- Community Input
- Science based data (Attachment 3)
- Resources available (funding and personnel)
- Political climate
- Willing cooperators
- Global, national, and local trends (such as climate issues, water quality and quantity issues)
- Local ordinances
- Economic feasibility
- Is any other entity primarily addressing need?

Priority Natural Resource Issues:

- Water quality and quantity
- Soil health, preservation, and retention
- Economic and environmental sustainability of farmers, forest, and farmland
- Shoreline resources and marine life habitat
- Human willingness to invest in conservation
- Land use
- Wildlife habitat, rural and urban
- Energy (i.e. conservation, alternative generation resources)
- Air quality

Conservation Actions to Address Priority Natural Resource Issues
(See Attachment 1 for detailed information):

1. In cooperation with Island County's water quality and ground water monitoring programs, assist landowners district wide in meeting their water quality and quantity goals.
2. Provide conservation technical assistance and conservation planning upon request.
3. Identify conservation cost-share opportunities and assist with practice implementation.
4. Follow-up with conservation plan implementation.
5. Assist local governments by providing technical assistance to manage stormwater.
6. Work with partners to provide technical assistance to coordinate complex natural resource projects.
7. Participate in partner planning processes to achieve economic and environmental sustainability of farmers, forest, and farmland
8. Work with partners to collaborate on marketing and policy strategies to preserve viability of working lands.
9. Market natural resource conservation to improve rural/urban connections.
10. Provide adult and youth natural resource education.

District Operations Priorities:

- Satisfied and informed customers
- Stable funding and fiscal accountability
- Satisfied, well-trained employees and a ready and willing corps of volunteers
- Engaged and well-trained board
- Complete and current policy manual, procedures and processes
- Maintain positive relationships with other conservation districts, the Conservation Commission, and other government and NGO partners
- Marketing who and what we are
- Maintain visible, suitable, and accessible office space

District Operations Actions
(See Attachment 2 for further information):

1. Provide accurate and complete information in a simple and understandable format.
2. Be responsive in a timely manner.
3. Regularly seek feedback from customers and the public.
4. Renew local funding and seek grants/donations to fund service to landowners and customers.
5. Continue to be a good conservation district example for audits and district accountability.
6. Provide employee development opportunities and cross training.
7. Provide employees and board members the opportunity to participate in state, regional, and national conservation organizations.
8. Provide competitive compensation packages.
9. Review and, if needed, update policy & procedure manual and related processes at least annually.
10. Regular positive engagement and agreements with all partners that result in effective services for customers.

11. Utilize all tools available to communicate district information to WICD's diverse audience.

Attachment 1

Conservation Actions to Address Priority Natural Resource Issues:

1. In cooperation with Island County's water quality and ground water monitoring programs, assist landowners district wide in meeting their water quality and quantity goals.

#	Goal	How
1.A	Identify and prioritize watersheds.	• Work with local and state partners using available data.
1.B	Maintain WICD's non-regulatory technical assistance role.	• Establish referral system with Island County and DOE to assist landowners.
1.C	Illustrate improvement in water quality and water quantity.	• Evaluate landowner and watershed progress as NRCS plans and BMP's are implemented.

2. Provide conservation technical assistance and conservation planning upon request

#	Goal	**How** (Note: Numbers are on an annual basis).
2.A	Support farmers in balancing their production goals while implementing environmentally sustainable farming practices.	• Assist at least 12 farm owners with site visits and BMP recommendations using NRCS planning process. • Complete 12 farm plans, including NRCS RMS plans, annually.
2.B	Promote active management of forest lands, both urban and rural.	• Assist at least 12 forest landowners with site visits and BMP/forest management recommendations including forest plan implementation, and compliance with designated forest tax program. • Complete 8 forest conservation plans.
2.C	Assist rural and urban landowners in reducing quantity of stormwater, while improving quality of runoff through LID/Alternative Stormwater practices.	• Provide 30 landowners with TA including site visits, letters and/or plans.
2.D	Assist bluff and shoreline residents.	• Assist 20 landowners with guidance on vegetation and shoreline management.
2.E	Assist homeowners to enhance backyard habitat.	• Provide 36 residential landowners with recommendations.

3. Identify conservation cost-share opportunities and assist with practice implementation.

#	Goal	How
3.A	Maintain farm and forest land in natural resource production. Insure that priority BMP's are implemented to achieve environmental benefit, including situations where cost may seem prohibitive to landowner.	• Assist landowners in linking to conservation easement programs. • Provide cost-share opportunities through local, state, and federal funding opportunities, including NRCS and WSCC, as well as other from other sources. • Utilize WICD Board to prioritize and rank local cost share projects.

		• Use WSCC Data Base to apply for WSCC cost share funding. • Partner funding between WSCC and NRCS cost share and incentive based programs.

4. Follow-up with conservation plan implementation.

#	Goal	How
4.A	Provide follow-up with landowner implementation of BMPs.	• Refine client database using available technology. • Assemble data annually, including data on progressive plan implementation.
4.B	Report BMPs recommended and implemented annually to all funding partners.	• Share data annually through district and funding partner processes, respecting the confidentiality of WICD's relationship with landowners.

5. Assist local governments by providing technical assistance to manage stormwater.

#	Goal	How
5.A	Promote WICD as "go to" entity to obtain resources for LID/Alternative Stormwater management for home owners and local jurisdictions.	• Engage in development of LID/stormwater code, including design of an incentive based system for stormwater retrofits. • Through nurturing strong relationships with WICD/NRP staff and county, town and city planning staff.

6. Work with partners to provide technical assistance to coordinate complex natural resource projects.

#	Goal	How
6.A	Work on a project or watershed level to bring stakeholders and interested individuals to achieve a positive natural resource improvement outcome.	• Coordinate and seek grant funding for targeted projects that align with WICD natural resource objectives. • Work with stakeholder groups to move forward in addressing emerging issues such as climate adaptation and energy efficiency.

7. Participate in partner planning processes to achieve economic and environmental sustainability of farmers, forest, and farmland

#	Goal	How
7.A	Bring respected, science based recommendations to governing bodies when decisions are being made affecting resource lands regulations.	• Provide a forum for landowners and partners to convene, and help them reach consensus so that one voice is brought to governing, decision making bodies when regulations are being decided that affect natural resource land management. • Staff and Board shall develop relationships with citizen groups representing a broad spectrum of views and opinions on resource land management. • Staff will strive to understand regulations

		affecting landowners at local, state and federal level.
7.B	Represent landowner interests as technical advisors on local, state and national committees.	• Represent landowner perspective as a member of local groups, prioritizing projects for funding opportunities. I.e. Whidbey Local Integrating Organization and Salmon Technical Advisory Group. Participate in state and national policy development efforts when needed.

8. Working with partners to collaborate on marketing and policy strategies to preserve viability of working lands.

#	Goal	How
8.A	Increase economic vitality of farm land.	• Facilitate the development of diverse partnerships to collaborate on effective marketing of local agricultural products and experiences to on and off-island populations. (NABC, WIG, WIGA)
8.B	Increase economic vitality of forest land.	• Develop and maintain educational partnerships and linkages to resources for forest management. (WSU, DNR)
8.C	Expand knowledge of designated forest, Public Benefits Rating System, and Current Use tax programs.	• Provide quality information to landowners, land managers, and advocates.
8.D	Maintain WICD's role as a resource hub.	• Direct landowners and land managers to technical resources.

9. Market natural resource conservation to improve rural/urban connections.

#	Goal	How
9.A	Promote a holistic understanding of production and ecosystems processes.	• Employ a variety of communications, outreach and educational channels.

10. Provide adult and youth natural resource education.

#	Goal	How Note: Numbers are based on an annual basis.
10.A	Develop and deliver high quality adult educational programming on natural resource conservation.	• Provide 10 presentations at partner events. • Provide 15 technical workshops. • Provide ongoing meeting facilitation as needed for projects or as requested by partners and landowners.
10.B	Offer grade-level specific educational programming, to all Whidbey school districts.	• Identify locally tailored and targeted messaging and programming for youth education. • Develop local and statewide partnerships and funding opportunities. • Evaluate effectiveness of programming relative to state and federal learning standards and feedback.
10.C	Employ a variety of online	• Research trends and resources in online

	educational tools to promote conservation resources to diverse audiences.	communications. • Design targeted strategies and routes for most efficient use of online platforms.
10.D	Employ a variety of print educational and outreach tools to promote conservation resources to diverse audiences.	• Research trends and resources in print communications. • Design targeted strategies and routines for most efficient use of print platforms.
10.E	Accurately reflect the number of WICD contacts reached through educational programming and the broad representation of natural resource topics addressed, within a given fiscal year.	• Develop and maintain a cohesive tracking system. • Provide staff training and professional development to effectively manage and refine the tracking system.

Attachment 2

District Operations Actions

1. Provide accurate and complete information in a simple and understandable format.

#	Goal	How
1.A	Informed WICD Board of Supervisors as well as taxpayers and the general public.	• Provide clear, complete and concise financial, contract, policy and project information to the Board of Supervisors at monthly, open public Board of Supervisors meetings. • Post District operations information on WICD website. • Complete an annual WICD planning process, including an opportunity for public input. • Maintain an up-to-date 5 year, long range plan as required by WSCC.

2. Be responsive in a timely manner.

#	Goal	How
2.A	Bring a high level of transparency and responsiveness to WICD partners, cooperators and to the general public.	• Provide information through formal and informal processes upon request. • Develop processes, systems, and tools within the WICD staff to insure responses to information requests are timely.

3. Regularly seek feedback from customers and the public.

#	Goal	How
3.A	Continue to develop and maintain meaningful professional relationships with partners and landowners, while maintaining an efficient feedback system for clients and the general public.	• Maintain an active and accessible reputation to the public. • Utilize efficient survey tools. • Purchase and train staff on Access for client tracking.

4. Renew local funding and seek grants/donations to fund service to landowners and customers.

#	Goal	Who	How
4.A	Maintain consistent funding from year to year in order to Ensure staffing levels to support natural resource and operational implementation goals.	**All Staff**	• Work with Island County Commissioners, in collaboration with Snohomish CD, to secure ongoing assessment or rates and charges for Island County. • Work with WSCC and WACD to secure state funding for WSCC grants, cost share and special projects. • Cultivate new and existing relationships with local, regional and state partners while collaboratively seeking funding. • Work with private individuals and NGO's to secure funding for special projects. • Identify and pursue grant writing opportunities to achieve district program goals as they become available. • Work with WACD to put together an education package with other districts and entities for targeted, science-based programming for youth.

5. Continue to be a good conservation district example for audits and district accountability.

#	Goal	How
5.A	Achieve highest level of accountability, both in district operations and financial audits, to ensure the proper, effective and efficient use of public funds.	• Conduct annual internal audits to ensure that District operational processes and procedures are satisfactory. • Comply with all state and federal audit requirements. • Continually improve and adjust district operations to provide the best level of service to the public and to our partners. • Assist other conservation districts during transitions.

6. Provide employee development opportunities and cross training.

#	Goal	How
6.A	WICD will maintain a highly trained, satisfied staff, with low turnover.	• Provide training for staff to effectively carry out their jobs. • Utilize WADE, Center for Technical Development (CTD), NRCS, WSCC, Enduris, L & I, SAO, and all other opportunities for staff training.

6.B	Minimize interruptions to operations if key staff leave district.	• Plan for employee departures from the district by cross training and anticipating change when necessary.

7. Provide employees and board members the opportunity to participate in state, regional, and national conservation organizations.

#	Goal	How
7.A	Maintain and increase awareness of conservation issues on a regional, state and national level in order to bring resources and collaborative partner opportunities to WICD as well as to our local partners.	• Through participation in the Puget Sound District Caucus, WADE, WSCC, WACD, NACD, NRCS activities. • Through participation with NGO's – both local and regional. • Through seeking out new partner opportunities wherever opportunities become available.

8. Provide competitive compensation packages.

#	Goal	How
8.A	Maintain a staff who feel they are appreciated, as well as being compensated fairly and competitively.	• Conduct staff reviews at intervals based on the WICD Policy manual. Reviews will include discussion of wages. • Research local wages and benefits, as well as wages paid by CD's and similar entities in the Puget Sound region. • Include staff in grant writing in order to maintain strong district funding.

9. Review and, if needed, update policy & procedure manual and related processes at least annually.

#	Goal	How
9.A	Maintain a current WICD Policy and Procedure manual.	• Staff will propose updates to Board of Supervisors at least annually, or at additional times when needed, to insure compliance with SAO Schedule 22. • Ensure that policies are organized and accessible to the WICD Board, Staff and the general public.

10. Regular positive engagement and agreements with all partners that result in effective services for customers.

#	Goal	How
10.A	Be an active and accessible presence to partners. (See 3.A)	• Facilitate regular one-on-one meetings with partners, and ensure WICD staff attendance at partner events.

11. Utilize all tools available to communicate district information to WICD's diverse audience.

#	Goal	How
11.A	Increase awareness and understanding of WICD's	• Identify and tailor messaging and strategic outreach plans for:

	unique role in the community.	○ Local, state, and federal politicians ○ Residents & landowners ○ Youth ○ Legislators ○ Congressional representatives
11.B	Employ the use of a strategically developed communications toolkit by all WICD staff when interfacing with the public.	• Identify and compile available tools for communications and assemble in a strategically organized toolkit for use by WICD staff and Board. • Train all WICD staff in proper use of specific tools for specific audiences. • Solicit feedback from the public on communications methods on an annual basis.
11.C	Be a well-known leader in professional communications.	• Continue to maintain clear and consistent messaging across all communications and outreach platforms and in WICD staff relationships with partners and landowners.

Washington Conservation Districts assisting land managers with their conservation choices

Attachment 3

Following are examples of the sources of data considered by WICD in both identifying natural resource concerns and addressing them. (Note: sources in blue text are links to website information).

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) - Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)
- USDA Web Soil Survey
- WSU AgWeathernet
- Island County Water Resources Management Plan including CARA (Critical Aquifer Recharge Area)
- Economic Development Council population information
- USDA Agricultural Census
- Farm Service Agency data
- Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Climate Impact Group
- Dept of Natural Resources (WDNR) stream typing maps
- Island County zoning & code
- Washington Administrative Code
- Island County Assessor parcel data
- Island County GIS
- Regional GIS data
- MRC – Sound IQ
- Puget Sound Partnership data resources and action agenda
- WA State Dept. of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)
- Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC)
- Dept. of Ecology (ECY)
- WA State Dept. of Health Shellfish Information
- Island County Data
- Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) - WDFW
- DNR Natural Heritage Species
- Local and Regional surveys and data sets created by ourselves and partner entities
- Tribal information