



STATE OF WASHINGTON
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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February 6, 2025

To: K.D. Chapman-See, Director
Office of Financial Management

From: James Thompson, Executive Director
State Conservation Commission

Subject: 6% Operating Budget Reductions

The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) implements vital incentive-based programs that provide funding for technical assistance and implementation of conservation projects to achieve effective, multi-benefit solutions for our most pressing natural resources while also creating jobs and driving economic activity.

SCC recognizes that current revenue forecasts, increasing costs, and growing caseloads require cuts to achieve a balanced state budget. We take the Office of Financial Management's directive to cut 6% of our General Fund Operating funding seriously and appreciate the opportunity to participate in this decision-making exercise.

SCC's small budget provides limited opportunity for budget reductions that will not entirely eliminate the utility of individual programs. Out of our \$16.9 million operating budget, more than 80% is passed through to local conservation districts. This funding pays conservation district staff salaries in local communities, keeps the lights on at conservation districts, enables conservation districts to serve their communities, and drives locally-led conservation of natural resources across Washington. Any cuts to funding will have compounding effects in local communities across our state at a time when the future of federal funding is uncertain.

The remaining 20% of operating funding, supports agency operations. With a staff of only 35 FTE's, any cuts to staffing will have significant, long-term impacts on the agency's ability to function. We have historically been understaffed and are in the process of aligning resources and staff capacity to best meet agency objectives and obligations. Additionally, any cuts to staffing will negatively impact the remaining staff's ability to be successful in their roles.

None of the proposed cuts were easy decisions to make. These cuts will impact specific programs and agency functions but allow us to maintain resiliency and minimize the

impacts on SCC and conservation district services. We have attempted to limit the impact to local communities and conservation districts in our proposal. The enclosed spreadsheet details our proposal.

Thank you for your ongoing support and collaboration in managing our budget. We appreciate your efforts in reviewing budget adjustments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. Thompson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

James Thompson
Executive Director

Budget Savings Options 2025

Dollars in Thousands

Agency: Washington State Conservation Commission

Agency Priority H, M, L	Impact 1-5	Program/Activity	GF-S					Brief Description and Rationale	Effective Date (MM/YY)	Impacts of Reductions and Other Considerations	Law/Reg. Change Required (cite)
			FY 25	FY 26	FY 27	FY28	FY 29				
H	1	Reduce Engineering grant Program		364.5	364.5	450	450	The Engineering Grant Program provides funding for engineering services and technical assistance at conservation districts. This reduction to the Engineering Grant Program maintains some engineering services and support but with reduced funding.	07/25	Reduction to SCC's Engineering grant program would reduce funding available for conservation districts for professional engineering services and technical assistance. This cut may slow down or reduce the number of completed natural resources projects requiring engineering services. This would have a knock-on-effect for conservation districts and the communities they serve.	none
H	1	Reduce Sustainable Farms & Fields grant Program		90	90	90	90	SFF provides funding for farmers and ranchers to adopt climate-smart farming practices. This reduction allows SCC to continue to administer the SFF program but will result in fewer projects completed.	07/25	Reduction to SCC's SFF grant program would reduce funding for farmers and ranchers to implement climate-smart practices that increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This cut will reduce the number or scale of completed projects. This would have a knock-on-effect for conservation districts and the communities they serve.	none
H	1	Reduce Riparian Plant Propagation grant Program		78	78	78	78	RPPP provides funding to conservation districts and plant nurseries to grow the native trees and shrubs necessary for riparian restoration projects across the state. This reduction allows SCC to continue to administer the RPPP program but will result in fewer contracts with conservation districts and nurseries.	07/25	This reduction will result in fewere native trees and shrubs available for riparian restoration in the state. This would have a knock-on-effect for conservation districts, plant nurseries, and the communities they serve.	none
M	1	Reduce Agency outreach		50	50	50	50	Reduction to SCC's outreach and advertising efforts	07/25	SCC's presence in community organizations and events will be reduced.	none
M	1	Reduce Agency micro grants		15	15	15	15	Reduction to SCC's micro grants will reduce the financial support a limited number of CD's receive for small projects or pieces of work.	07/25		none
M	1	Reduce Agency travel		50	50	50	50	SCC staff will limit in state and out of state travel.	07/25	Staff will shift in-person meetings to virtual when possible. This will limit the agency's ability to steward relationships.	none
M	1	Reduce Agency training		70	70	70	70	SCC staff will limit staff professional development.	07/25	SCC staff will have fewer resources available to complete professional development activities that would enhance or improve their ability to complete their job functions.	none
H	3	Eliminate DAP grant program		300	300			This program is less than six years old and serves fewer than 1,000 people. SCC would eliminate the DAP grant program and move the staff in that program position to a vacant position within the agency.	07/25	Eliminating this program will eliminate the after disaster funding currently available to farmers and ranchers.	none
M	1	TBD				214.5	214.5	SCC will make appropriate reductions in outyears to meet this target. This will allow the agency flexibility to review current reductions and adjust our plan as needed for FY28 & FY29.	07/27	To be determined.	none

Priority:

- L = Low priority agency activity or program
- M = Medium priority agency activity or program
- H = High priority agency activity or program

Impact:

- 1 = Allows continuation of the program/activity at a reduced level
- 2 = Eliminates the ability to perform program objectives
- 3 = Eliminates agency function
- 4 = Long term implications (moves the problem to next biennium)
- 5 = Short term (reduction to one time increase)