

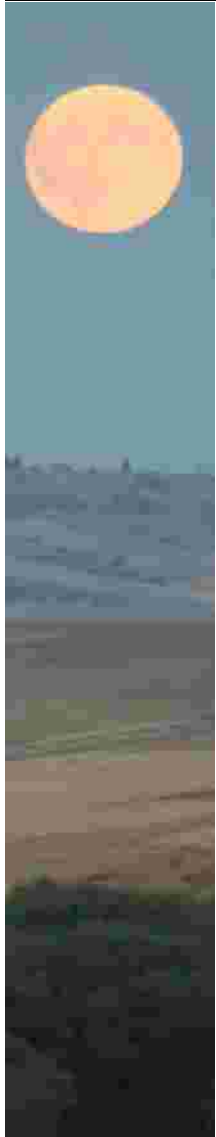


# **Orientation for Conservation District Supervisors and Staff**

Spokane Conservation District  
August 2011

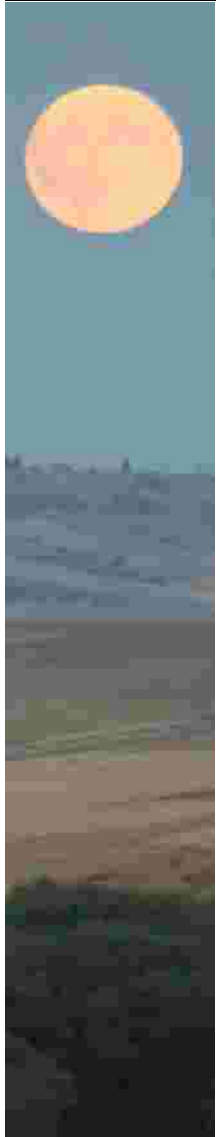


- i “How did you come to be here?”
- i “What do you personally want to accomplish?”



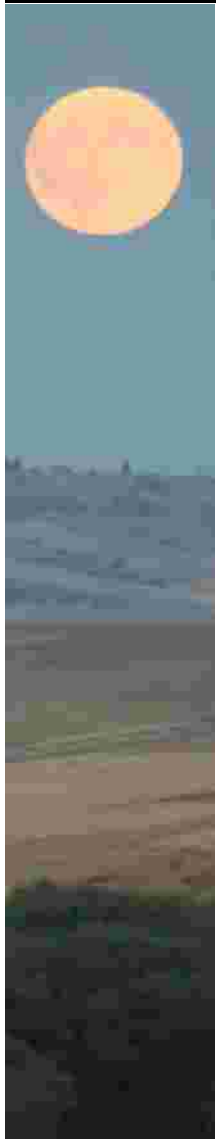
§ To take available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user for conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources

# History

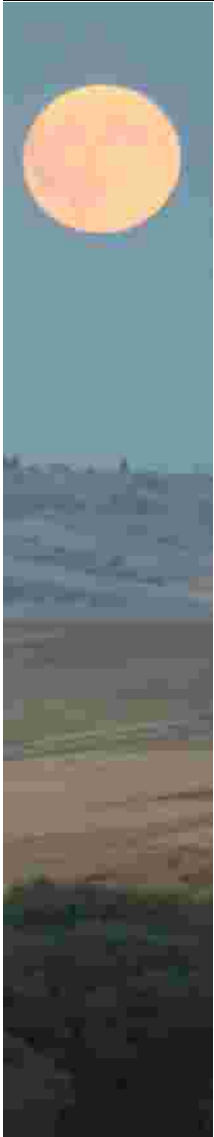


- i The beginning – Hugh Hammond Bennett
- i Congressional Hearing

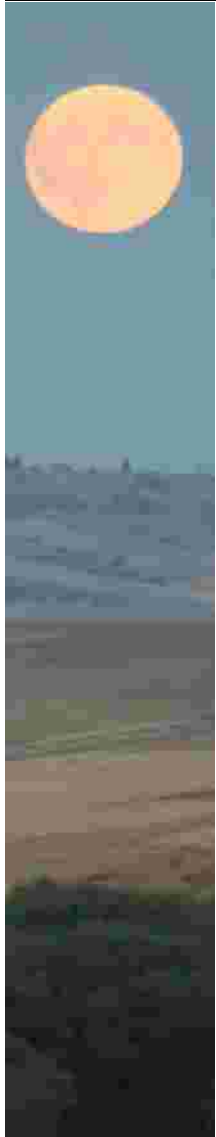




- i Soil Erosion a Menace to National Welfare
- i Soil Erosion Service 1933 – operated out of Department of Interior
- i Demonstration Sites
- i Competition between agencies – Interior, Ag, Extension



- i Soil Conservation Service (SCS) – Created April 1935 with Public Law 46
- i SCS now Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- i 75 plus years of partnership with Conservation Districts



- i Need for Local Guidance – Priorities, Culture, Credibility
- i Model Conservation District Law 1937
- i 1939 Washington State Legislature passed RCW 89.08
- i Authorized Formation of Districts & Conservation Commission

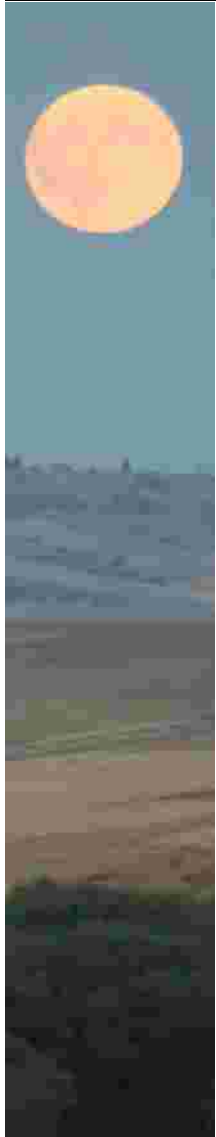




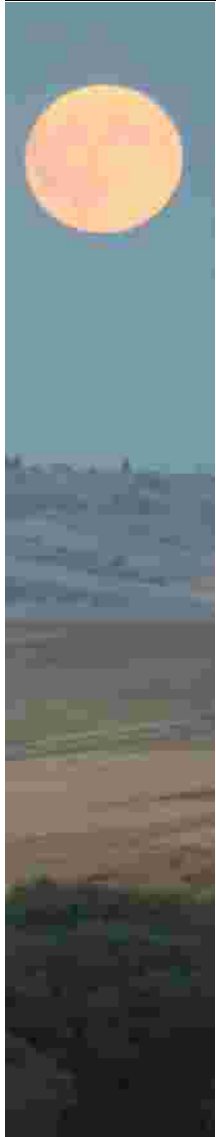
## Conservation Commission / Conservation District Relationship

- i Since 1939 - state agency that provides direct services for conservation districts
- i Appoints two supervisors to each district board.
- i Compiles the biennial budget requests of all districts, with the agency budget - submits to the Governor and legislature
- i Monitoring the accountability of districts & compliance with state and federal laws.

# District Powers & Authorities

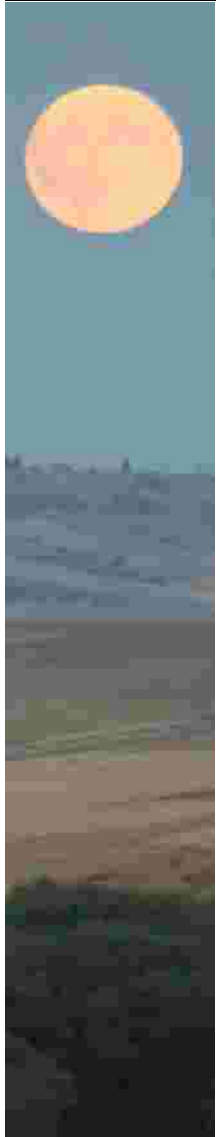


- i Conservation Districts are local government
- i Conservation Districts receive programs and funding from the Legislature
- i RCW 89.08 authorizes the mission and management of a conservation district
- i Local governance provided by your five-member Board of Supervisors
- i Supervisors remain ultimately responsible for the operations of the district



## i RCW 89.08

A conservation district organized under the provisions of this...act shall constitute a governmental subdivision of this state and a public body corporate and politic exercising public powers...and the supervisors thereof, shall have the following powers...



- i Conduct surveys, investigations and research
- i Conduct educational & demonstration projects
- i Carry out preventative and control measures
- i Cooperate, or enter into agreements with and to furnish financial or other aid to, any agency, governmental or otherwise, or any occupier of lands within the district . . .
- i Prepare and keep current a comprehensive long-range program
- i Prepare an annual work plan



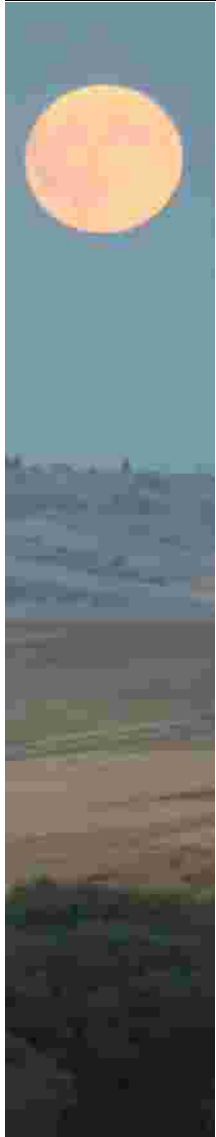
- i Hold public hearings
- i Plans, developed by each district...shall have official status
- i Administer any project or program concerned with the conservation of renewable natural resources
- i Cooperate and enter into joint arrangements with other (conservation) districts.
- i Accept donations, gifts, and contributions in money, services, materials, or otherwise from anyone
- i Designate an area, state, and national association of conservation districts as a coordinating entity...

# Mission & Principles



- i Conservation districts develop and implement programs to protect and conserve:
  - § Soil
  - § Water
  - § Farmland
  - § Rangeland
  - § Woodland
  - § Wildlife
  - § Energy
  - § Other renewable natural resources on non-federal lands
  - § Or federal lands with interlocal agreement

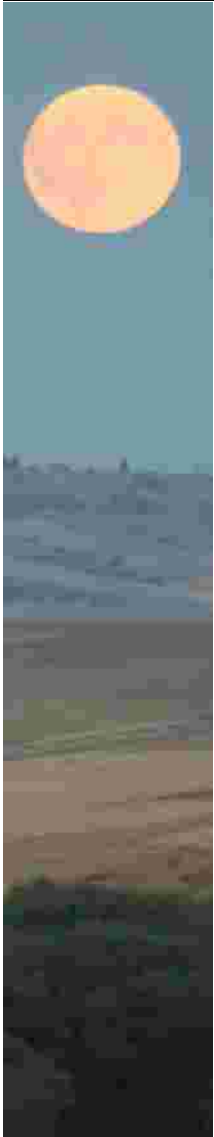




## i Basic Principles

- § Conservation should be led by local citizens
- § Where private land ownership connects to natural resources, that is where conservation districts are
- § Final responsibility for conservation lies with the landowner
- § Landowners have legitimate operating goals
- § Responsive to both landowners and operators, and the community as a whole

# Supervisors



## § Establish vision & policy

? Supervisors set direction through vision of resource needs and the program needed to address needs

? Development of policy

? Staff implements policies

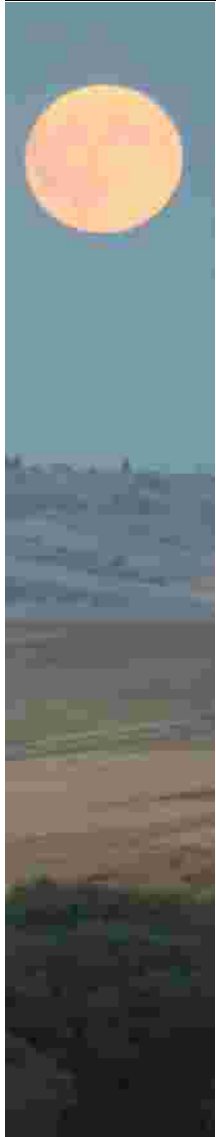
## § Hold people accountable

? Staff, each other, partners, agencies, and others

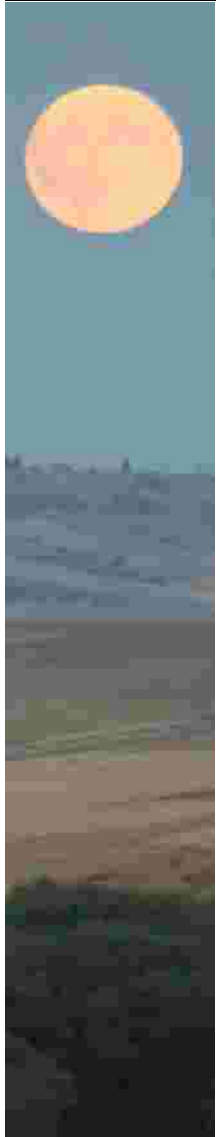
## § Work directly with decision makers

? Local, state, tribal and federal legislators and agencies

? Regional, state and national associations



- i are public officials
- i may employ staff
- i shall determine staff duties and compensation
- i may delegate authority
- i shall provide records of all proceedings
- i shall provide for an annual audit
- i shall serve without compensation
- i shall not levy taxes or issue bonds
- i shall remain ultimately responsible for the operations of the district



- Term of office is 3 years
- 12 regularly scheduled board meetings
- Committee and special meetings
- WACD area and state meetings
- Estimated average – 20 days per year  
(absolute minimum)



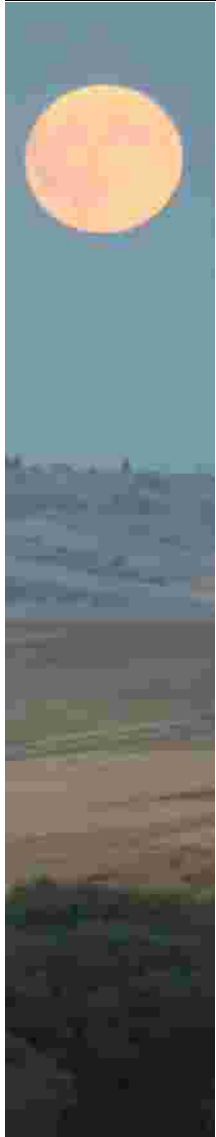
- i WADE Training Session
- i Enduris
- i WACD Conference & Events
- i WSCC Orientation
- i Other



- Personal satisfaction
- Interaction with others
- Critical input
- Learning opportunities
- Unique opportunity to make a real difference!

# Planning & Programs



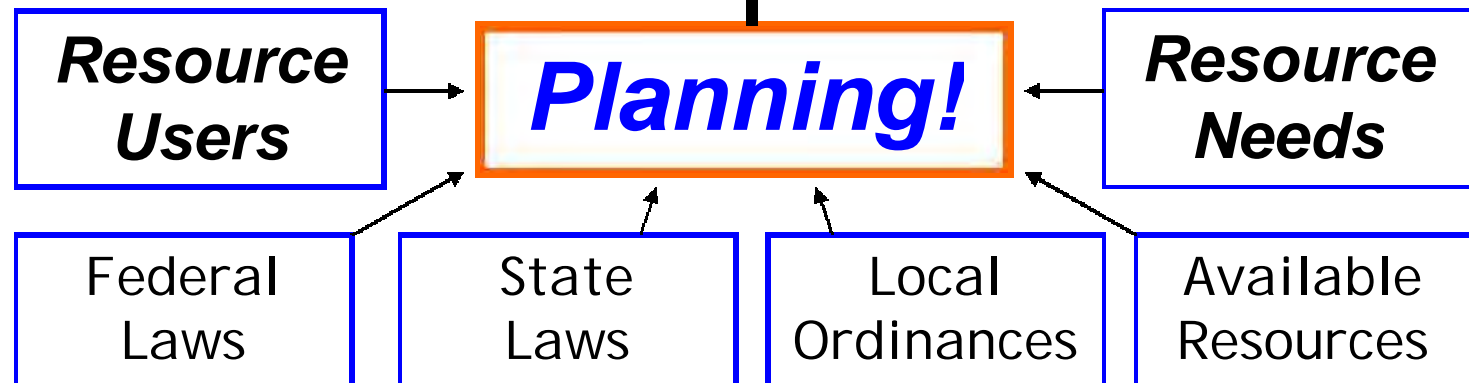


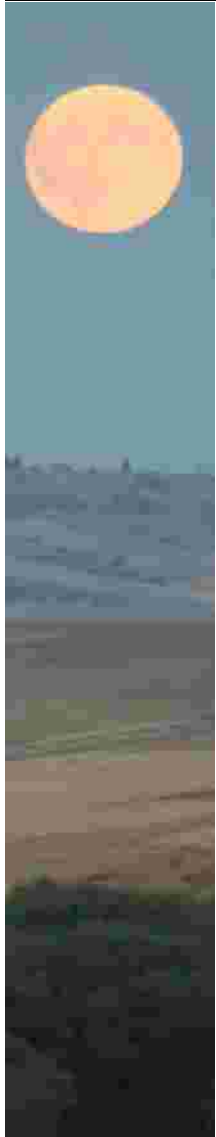
- i Conservation Districts can and should provide local leadership, knowledge and experience to protect natural resources
  - § To all potentially interested parties (not just the ones you like!)
  - § Bring them together, identify their needs and resources and collaborate with them



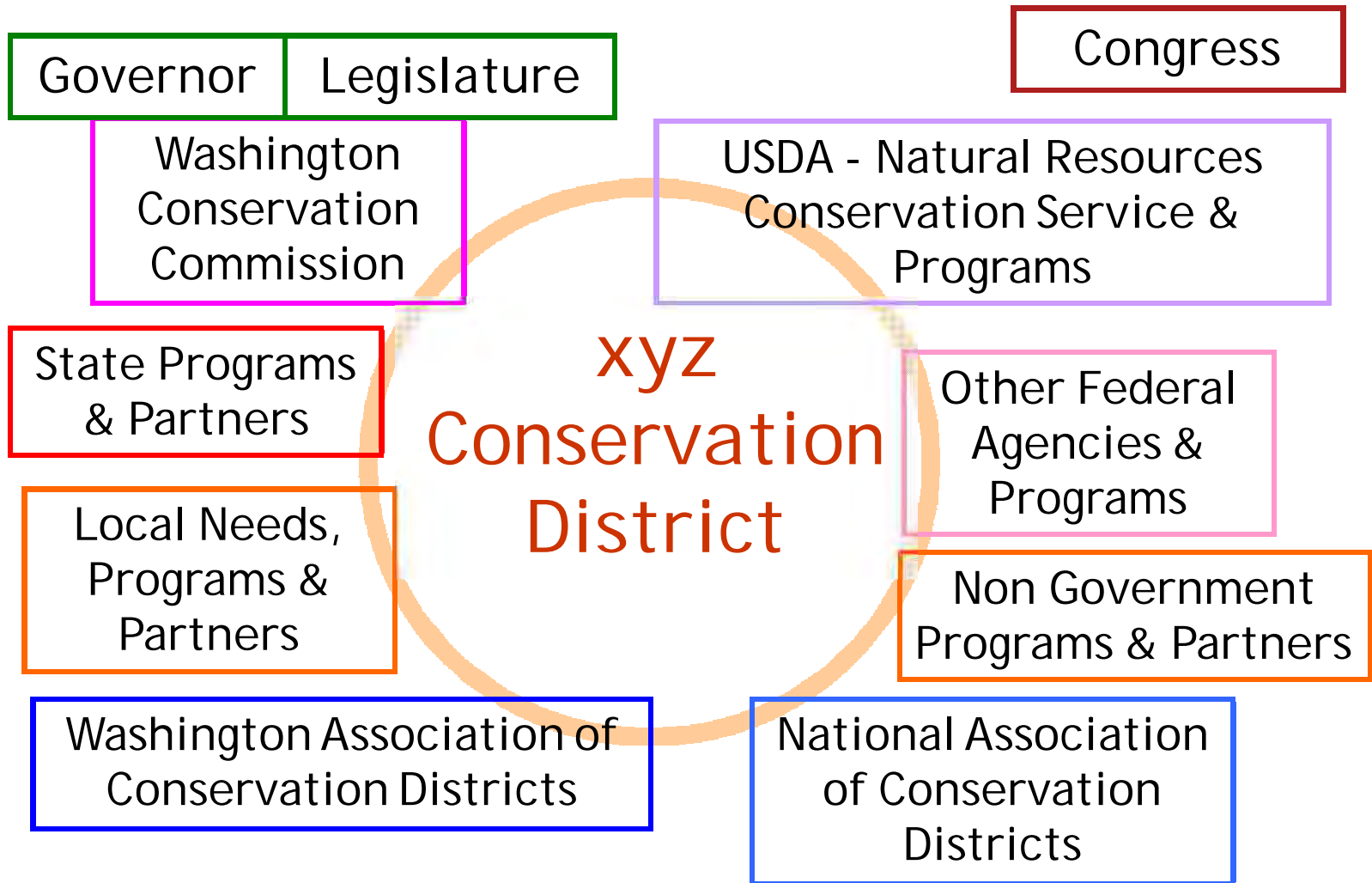
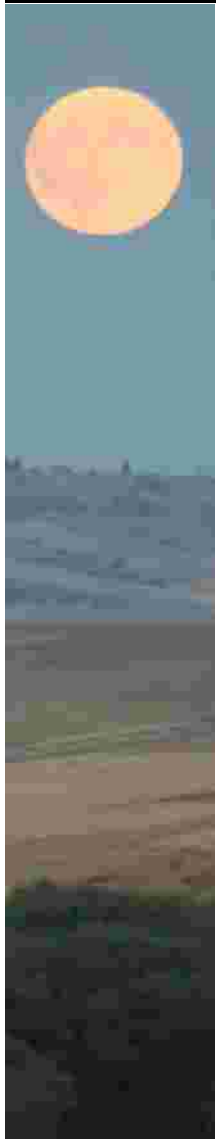
# Services for Resource Users & Public

## Conservation District Program





- i Values = what you care about
- i Vision = desired future condition
- i Mission = why your organization exists
- i Goals = achievable results
- i Program Areas = resource concerns
- i Annual Priorities = what is most important?
- i Annual Plan = schedule of tasks/activities
- i Track progress and revise = do it better



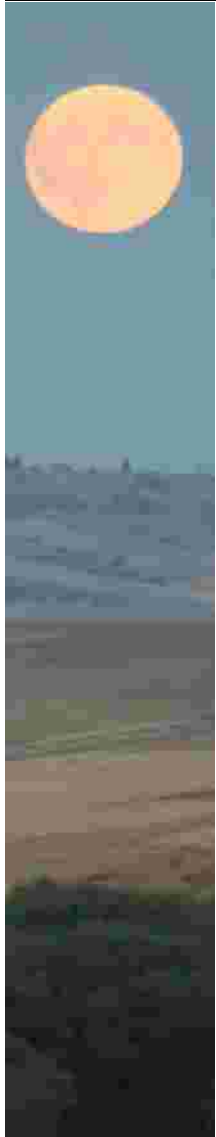
# Partnerships



- i WSCC – Washington State Conservation Commission
- i WACD – Washington Association of Conservation Districts
- i NRCS – USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- i Other local, state, federal and private organizations



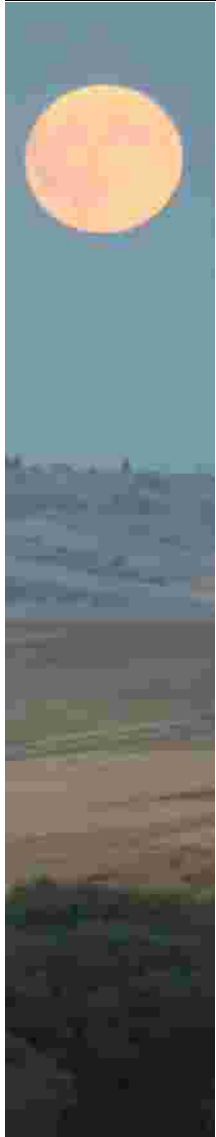
- i A State agency formed with District Law
- i The Commission is governed by a ten-member board
  - § Three elected by Conservation Districts (East, Central, West), plus the WACD president
  - § Two appointed by Governor
  - § Four appointed by Directors of Agriculture, Ecology, Natural Resources, WSU
- i Commission formation, structure, duties and authority provided in RCW 89.08



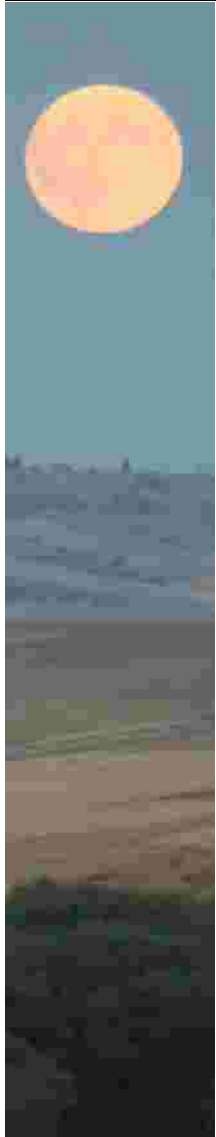
i Since the establishment of the Conservation Commission in 1939, the state agency has provided direct services to assist conservation districts – examples include:

- § Funding
- § Invoicing
- § Budgeting
- § Fiscal Operations
- § Auditing
- § Planning
- § Reporting
- § Policy Development
- § Webinars & Net Meetings
- § Statewide Coordination
- § Information Exchange
- § Administration
- § Accountability
- § Training
- § Capacity Building
- § District Operations
- § State Level Public Outreach

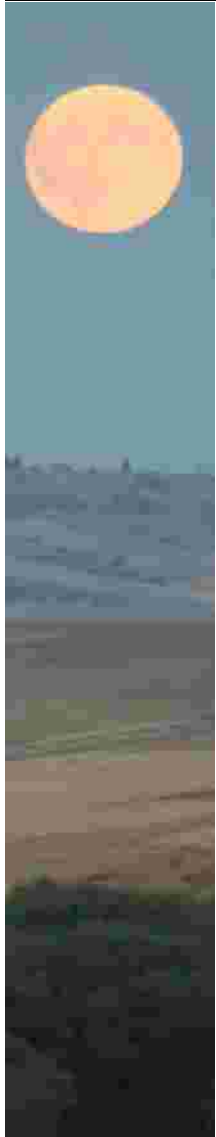




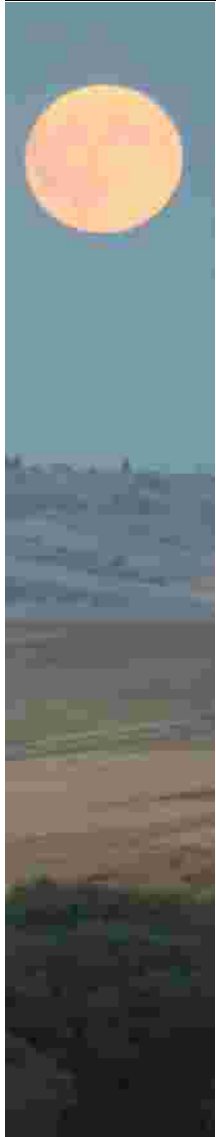
- i Conservation Commission appoints two supervisors to each district board.
- i Oversees election procedures for the three elected supervisor positions
- i Once every two years the agency compiles the biennial budget requests of all districts, combines them with the agency budget, and submits the full budget proposal to the Governor and legislature for funding consideration. Once the legislature passes a budget, the Commission allocates funding to the districts.



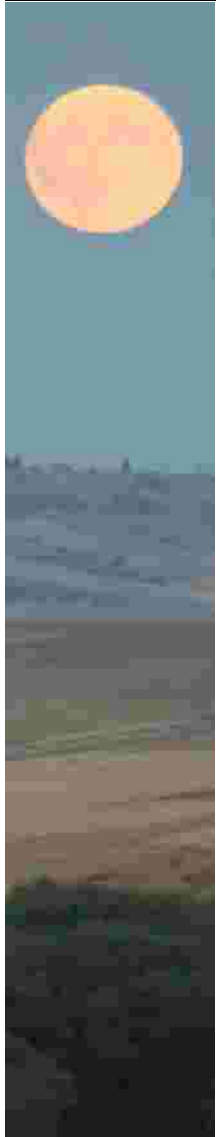
- i State law also directs the Commission to serve an important role in monitoring the accountability of districts, and working with them to help districts stay compliant with state and federal laws.
- i The Commission is an important partner with conservation districts, joining together for effective and efficient on-the-ground conservation in the state.



- i Owned by the Conservation Districts
- i Non-governmental
- i Not-for-profit organization (501c6)



- i “WACD is a voluntary non-governmental association to advance the purposes of conservation districts and their constituents by providing leadership, information, representation, products & services.”



- i Provides a combined voice
- i Pursues legislative and policy activity
- i Plant materials center
- i Hosts forums to inform, train and educate supervisors
- i Recognize outstanding district individuals and programs



- i Non-profit, nongovernmental organization representing over three thousand conservation districts and their state associations in the fifty states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.
- i Lobbies for federal conservation legislation and funding in Congress.
- i Provides brochures, reports, conservation films, training, and education.



Individuals

Local Conservation District (5 supervisors)

Area Associations (6 areas across state)

Washington Association of Conservation Districts  
(47 districts)

National Association of Conservation Districts  
(2946 districts)



- i Long and extensive tradition of work with conservation districts.
- i NRCS can provide
  - § Personnel
  - § Equipment
  - § Office space
  - § Technical assistance with soils, conservation practices, and planning with land users and others.





Basic framework for cooperation with USDA

Mutual Agreement

Signed by:

- § Secretary
- § Governor and/or Tribal Council
- § District and/or Tribe



Basic framework for state cooperation

Cooperative Working Agreement

Signed by:

- NRCS
- State conservation agency and/or Tribal Council
- District and/or Tribe



Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources

Chief NRCS

Regional Conservationist - West

State Conservationist

Area Conservationist

District Conservationist

Resource Conservationist

# Partners (continued)



## WSSC Member...and

- § Administers state laws protecting agricultural producers from diseases, insects, predators, and weeds.
- § Regulates fruit, seed and other agricultural product grading
- § Issues and approves licenses for nursery dealers, pesticide operators, and applicators; and issues labeling permits for products used by agricultural producers such as seed, fertilizer, pesticide, etc.
- § Involved in water resources, transportation, farm labor, and other matters related to the production, distribution and sale of agricultural commodities



## WSSC Member...and

- § Programs address air pollution, water pollution, solid waste, hazardous waste, noise pollution, litter and resource recovery, water resources, and shoreline and coastal zone management.
- § Both an administrative and a regulatory agency with authority to enforce the state's environmental laws.
- § Monitors all major waterways, administers grants for wastewater treatment facilities, and issues permits for all waste dischargers. Ecology also issues grants to reduce non-point water pollution.



## WSSC Member...and

- § Manages and protects state-owned lands
- § Foresters also assist private landowners with the Agriculture Conservation Program (ACP) and the Forestry Incentive Program (FIP)
- § Provide other limited free technical forestry assistance.
- § Administers the Forest Practices Act, a Washington state law regulating practices such as timber harvest.



## WSCC Member...and

- § Assistance from WSU is commonly found through the WSU Cooperative Extension.
- § Extension agents ("county agents") and specialists are available to counsel, educate and train conservation districts in economics, engineering, agronomy and soils, animal sciences, entomology, food science and technology, forestry and range management, home economics, horticulture, plant pathology, sociology, veterinary science, and many other areas.
- § Most counties have an Extension office which serves as the local contact for conservation districts to request Extension assistance.



Office of Financial Management (ORM)	Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)
other	





Farm Service Agency (FSA)	Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Forest Service (USFS)
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries	other



- i Counties can provide: office space; funding; co-sponsorship for watershed projects and responsibility for operation and maintenance; bridge and culvert replacement; use of county earthmoving equipment; cooperation on county parks and other county owned land; funds for soil survey.



- i County contacts include: commissioners, council, auditor, treasurer, recorder, engineer, assessor, highway superintendent, health officer, planning commission, parks and recreation department, weed district and others.
- i Similar assistance can be available for city & municipal governments.

# District Operations



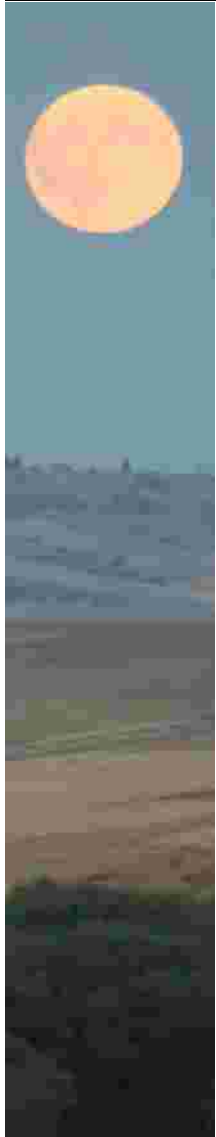
- i Assessment
- i Grants (federal, state, local, private)
- i NRCS TSP Agreements
- i County Funding
- i Equipment Rentals
- i Plant Materials Sales
- i Donations
- i Land Easements and/or Management
- i Fees for Products



- i Conservation District Law (RCW 89.08)
- i Municipal Code of Ethics (RCW 43.20)
- i Public Records Act (RCW
- i Open Public Meetings Act (RCW 42.30.110)
- i Engineers & Land Surveyors (RCW 18.43)

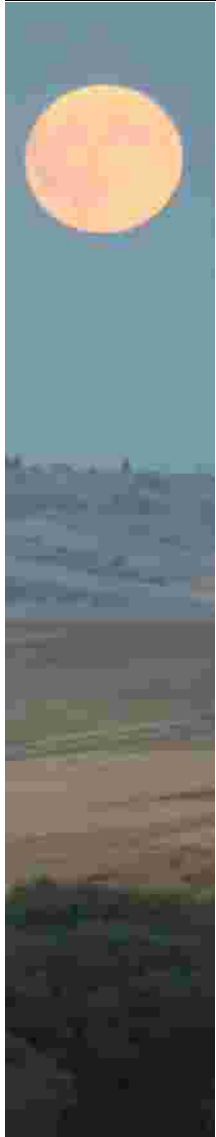


- i District Supervisors must set overall direction for district employees
- i All administration of employees is the responsibility of the conservation district board
- i One district supervisor should be the primary liaison between the board and district employees (“contact supervisor”)

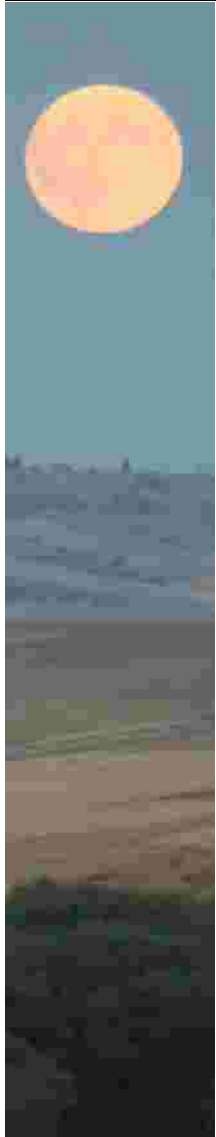


- i Orientation sessions should be provided to all new employees
- i Job descriptions should be clearly written and roles clearly understood between district employees and NRCS personnel
- i District officials should plan workloads with their employees and NRCS personnel
- i Performance reviews for employees should be done regularly





- i Legislature & RCW provide limited authority
- i Board governs District within scope of authority
- i District staff perform work as directed by Board



- i Board members do not govern, either through lack of knowledge or lack of commitment
- i Board members micromanage staff. The Board must set policy and enforce it. Employees serve at the will of the Board, not the other way around.
- i Board members are not active in representing the work and needs of the District with other decision makers at all levels. As public officials, you are more credible than your staff when talking with elected officials!

# General Discussion