



CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
OF WASHINGTON STATE
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South Yakima Conservation District



Annual Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2026

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Table of Contents

Mission	3
Natural Resource Priorities, Programs, and Activities	3
Water Quantity and Irrigation Water Management	3
Water Quality, Nutrient Management, and Livestock	4
Soil Health.....	6
Energy Conservation, Carbon Sequestration, and Greenhouse Gas Reduction	7
Habitat Restoration and Enhancement.....	8
Working Lands Protection	9
Noxious Weeds and Pests	10
District Programs and Activities	11
District Operations	11
Education and Outreach.....	12
Budget	13
Acronyms and Abbreviations	13

Mission

South Yakima Conservation District's mission is to promote and assist landowners with the wise use, development, and conservation of our renewable natural resources.

Natural Resource Priorities, Programs, and Activities

Water Quantity and Irrigation Water Management

Goals: Assist farmers and landowners promoting and maintaining efficient irrigation water usage. With activities such as soil moisture monitoring, irrigation water management planning, irrigation system conversions, and other activities.

Is this a state and/or regional priority along with being a local priority? Yes. While many of the valley's landowners have converted to more efficient irrigation systems, many smaller landowners and farmers have old and/or inefficient systems that are costly to replace. Irrigation water supply and usage is a concern for central and eastern Washington due to reliance on irrigation for farming and low annual precipitation. This is especially an issue during drought years. Some systems may provide too much water and cause runoff, while others don't provide enough water. System design can vary considerably for fields based on factors including soil type, crop(s) grown, timing of water supply, and other factors.

Source of data: DOE drought declarations, Bureau of Reclamation's Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, NRCS Washington State Irrigation Guide, WSU Extension

Other entities engaged: Yakama Nation, Yakima County VSP, NRCS, WSCC, BOR's Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, WSU Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center, other local conservation districts, local irrigation districts and water purveyors, local irrigation equipment companies

Funding Source(s): WSCC, WSDA, potential future grants

Objectives and Activities:

- Complete 2-4 irrigation conversion or efficiency projects.
- Promote proper irrigation water management with soil moisture monitoring by assisting 10 landowners annually on approximately 100-250 acres.
- Work with all irrigation districts to provide technical and financial assistance to irrigation system operators, producers, and landowners.
- Provide technical assistance to approximately 3-5 landowners resulting in the implementation of 3-5 IWM Plans.
- Participate by hosting or attending at least 2-3 informational webinars/meetings/workshops on Irrigation Water Management (IWM) and new alternative methods and technology in this field.
- Seek funding for irrigation BMPs/irrigation conversions and distribution efficiency by making contacts and submitting grant proposals. Work with other agencies, public, and affected landowners on drought resiliency and IWM.

- Continue to update landowner cost share list to determine the level of potential project needs within our district and secure cost-share funding to complete projects.



Corn under drip irrigation

Water Quality, Nutrient Management, and Livestock

Goals: Provide technical and/or cost share assistance to farmers and landowners to address concerns with excess nutrients, sediment, pesticides, and/or other pollutants in surface and ground waters. Work with livestock producers to create and update nutrient management plans and to address other resource concerns relating to their operations.

Is this a state and/or regional priority along with being a local priority? Yes. Water quality and non-point source pollution are concerns for many parts of the state, including critical aquifer recharge areas such as the GWMA, where there are areas that experience elevated nitrates in groundwater. Some residents with private wells experience nitrate concentrations at or above the health standard of 10 mg/L. Nitrate in groundwater can come from overapplication of nutrients (including commercial fertilizer), leaking septic systems, geological conditions, etc.

Much of SYCD's boundaries are in WRIA 37, where the Yakima River, Granger Drain, Sulphur Creek Wasteway, and Giffin Lake are listed on DOE's 303(d) list of impaired water bodies. There are two required TMDLs: Lower Yakima River Suspended Sediment TMDL and Granger Drain Fecal Coliform TMDL. The Giffin Lake Total Phosphorus TMDL is currently in development. Addressing water quality resource concerns can help farmers and landowners utilize their resources responsibly.

In addition, Yakima County has over sixty dairy and livestock facilities with the vast majority located in South Yakima Conservation District's boundary. Other livestock operations can include feedlot operations and grazing operations for pasture and/or rangeland. Dairies are required to have Dairy

Nutrient Management Plans under RCW 90.64 as part of manure management, and these plans must be updated periodically as operations change over time. Nutrient Management Plans are also beneficial for anyone who applies or stores nutrients on their land, whether from organic or inorganic/commercial sources.

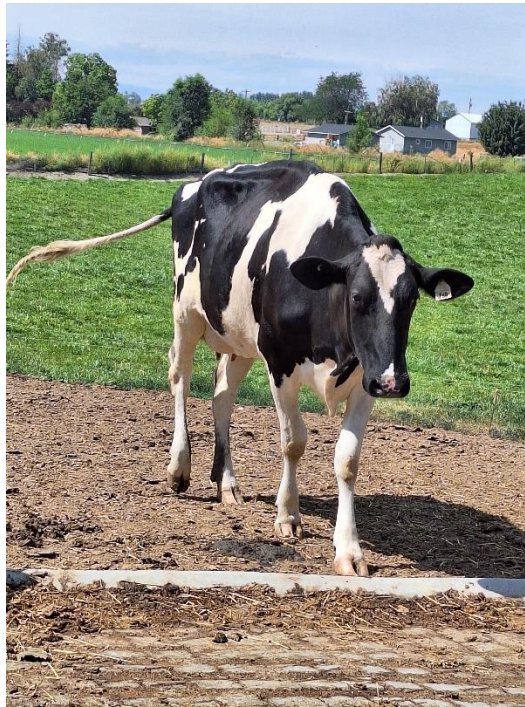
Source of data: Yakima County VSP Work Plan (Approved October 2017), Yakima County's GWMA website, local TMDLs, DOE's 303(d) list, RCW 90.64 Dairy Nutrient Management

Other entities engaged: GWMA, Yakima County VSP, WSDA, NRCS, Washington Dairy Federation, DOE, WSCC, Yakama Nation, local irrigation districts

Funding Source(s): WSCC, WSDA, other potential future sources

Objectives and Activities:

- Assist land managers with BMPs that protect and enhance water quality.
- Provide technical assistance to livestock producers in developing or updating Nutrient Management Plans for livestock and dairy operations and/or DOE's Manure Pollution Prevention Plan for the CAFO permit.
- Promote nutrient management practices through soil sampling, nutrient testing, record keeping, technical assistance, and education & outreach.
- Maintain contact with DOE regarding the status of impaired water bodies and TMDLs for Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs) within SYCD.
- Host or co-host one education & outreach meetings/workshops on Nutrient Management and new alternative BMPs.
- Assist livestock and dairy operations with BMPs that improve manure management, including structural improvements.
- Assist local conservation districts with nutrient management planning as needed through MOUs or other agreements.
- Attend trainings, workshops, or field days about water quality BMPs, including new research and implementation technologies.
- Explore funding opportunities to support technical assistance, outreach, cost share, and research.
- Coordinate with other local conservation districts about water quality monitoring in local watersheds.
- Review other local water quality studies and data.
- Attend regular GWMA Implementation Committee meetings.



Holstein-Friesian cow walking off pasture

Soil Health

Promote practices that maintain or enhance soil health through landowner and producer outreach, technical assistance, and cost share assistance.

Is this a state and/or regional priority along with being a local priority? Yes. Soil health and sustainability remains a national, state, regional, and local priority and is one of the founding principles for conservation districts and NRCS. Some challenges for soils within the district include low organic matter, alkalinity, and soil erosion via wind and water.

Source of data: NRCS Web Soil Survey; Soil Survey of Yakima County Area, Washington; WSDA's Washington Soil Health Initiative

Other entities engaged: NRCS, WSDA, WSCC, Yakama Nation, other local conservation districts

Funding Source(s): WSCC, local assessment, NRCS, WSDA, potential future grants

Objectives and Activities:

- Maintain and provide use of SYCD's no-till seed drills to 35-40 local landowners on approximately 1,000 acres.
- Work with producers to promote healthy and productive soils through soil testing, cover cropping, and other soil health practices.
- Attend or host a meeting, presentation, or workshop covering soil health topics and principles.
- Provide soil health assessments to landowners during projects or upon request.



South Yakima CD's no-till drills

Energy Conservation, Carbon Sequestration, and Greenhouse Gas Reduction

Goals: Promote energy conservation on facilities and in landscape farming and ranching. Assist landowners with implementing BMPs that reduce energy consumption, sequester carbon, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Is this a state and/or regional priority along with being a local priority? Yes. Washington is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving energy, and sequestering carbon to reduce climate change impacts. Switching to more energy-efficient equipment and utilizing best management practices to reduce carbon footprint helps producers ensure the sustainability of their farms. This priority is also becoming increasingly important in the marketing of local commodities. Many companies require producers to meet their standards to sell their products, and some farmers are entering quality standard programs or ecolabels such as Salmon Safe, GLOBALG.A.P., and USDA Certified Organic. In addition, other local organizations are supporting alternatives to agricultural burning as part of protecting air quality.

Source of data: Climate Commitment Act, Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency

Other entities engaged: WSCC, WSU, NRCS, WSDA, DOE, Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency, local utility companies (incentive programs)

Funding Source(s): WSCC, potential future grants

Objectives and Activities:

- Complete at least 1-2 projects and/or plans each fiscal year to implement related BMPs. Provide technical assistance about Climate Smart Practices through site visits and discussions with producers.
- Complete plans and implement projects utilizing Climate Smart Practices and best available tools.
- Attend trainings or workshops covering innovative or burgeoning technologies, tools, and practices such as alternatives to burning to address particulate matter and CO₂ emissions.



A pump station with a concrete water box and multiple filter systems for a pivot and drip system featuring a variable frequency drive.

Habitat Restoration and Enhancement

Goal: Improve fish & wildlife habitat quality, function, and values within the five critical areas while protecting agricultural viability by continuing to expand programs and partnership with landowners and agencies.

Is this a state and/or regional priority along with being a local priority? Yes. Yakima County and the Columbia Basin are home to unique shrubsteppe habitat, which is critical for endangered and threatened species such as sage grouse. Shrubsteppe habitat is affected by fragmentation, development, invasive species, and fire damage. In addition, riparian and salmon habitat remains a priority for the state level and local level. The Yakima River and its tributaries contain listed species and species of concern such as Pacific lamprey, steelhead, bull trout, coho salmon, Chinook salmon, and sockeye salmon. Unique ecosystems within the district also provide cultural significance to the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.

Source of data: Yakima County VSP Work Plan (Approved October 2017), Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration & Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI), BOR's Yakima Basin Integrated Plan

Other entities engaged: Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group, WDFW, Yakama Nation, Audubon Washington, Yakima County VSP, BOR's Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, BLM, DOE, DNR, WSCC, Cowiche Canyon Conservancy

Funding Source(s): WSCC, DOE, local assessment, potential future grants

Objectives and Activities:

- Complete at least one project and/or plan each fiscal year for habitat restoration and enhancement.

- Meet regularly with partners about ongoing projects and future opportunities.
- Attend trainings, webinars, and/or other events covering habitat enhancement and restoration.
- Provide technical assistance via site visits and other work for potential and ongoing projects.
- Work with landowners and other local organizations and agencies to gauge interest in riparian projects on private lands, including riparian forest buffers.
- Stay engaged with WSRRRI as it continues to develop and with other programs to explore opportunities for rangeland and shrubsteppe projects.
- Work with partners on efforts to implement fire-resilient practices such as green strips to reduce fire damage to rangelands.



Wood chip mulch placed around riparian trees and shrubs

Working Lands Protection

Goals: Assist landowners and land managers to promote sustainable use of the land and natural resources while supporting viability of working lands. Work with land managers and other organizations to preserve working lands through conservation easements and land use planning activities.

Is this a state and/or regional priority along with being a local priority? Yes. Cropland, rangeland, and forests face threats of structural development, including through housing and energy infrastructure. Rangeland in neighboring districts has been lost to solar power development, which disturbs critical wildlife habitat corridors.

Source of data: Yakima County VSP Work Plan (Approved October 2017), Yakima County VSP 5-Year Report (2021), Yakima County VSP 5-Year Report (2026), Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration & Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI), Yakima County Assessor's Office

Other entities engaged: WSCC (including Office of Farmland Preservation), local conservation districts, American Farmland Trust, Yakima County VSP, RCO, Yakima County, NRCS, farm associations and commodity commissions

Funding Source(s): WSCC, potential future sources

Objectives and Activities:

- Explore options for conservation easements for interested landowners.
- Stay informed of land-use changes through the local boundary review board and via Yakima County Public Services.
- Attend Stock Restricted Area Advisory Committee meetings.
- Maintain contact with agricultural commodity associations.
- Monitor land use changes through VSP, including gain and loss for habitat and agricultural lands.



A field crop farm during winter with Mt. Adams in the distance

Noxious Weeds and Pests

Continue working with landowners and encouraging the use of herbaceous weed treatment, planting cover crops, and other practices to discourage noxious weeds from establishing. Provide outreach about other invasive plants and pests.

Is this a state and/or regional priority along with being a local priority? Yes. Noxious weeds and other invasive plant species threaten natural habitat and agricultural lands by outcompeting native species and by invading cropland, pasture, rangeland, and other agricultural lands. Some invasive species such as tree of heaven are also host plants for other invasive agricultural pest species, such as

spotted lanternfly. Although spotted lanternfly is not present in Washington, state and local organizations continue outreach for community awareness. In addition, there are treatment areas in Wapato, Sunnyside, Mabton, and Grandview for Japanese beetle along with insect traps.

Source of data: Yakima County VSP Work Plan (Approved October 2017), Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board, Yakima County Noxious Weed Control Board, WSDA, WSU Extension

Other entities engaged: Yakima County Noxious Weed Board, Yakima County VSP, WSU Extension, Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board, WSDA, WSU Extension

Funding Source(s): WSCC, local assessment, potential future grants

Objectives and Activities:

- Provide technical assistance to landowners on practices that help reduce or eliminate noxious weeds and invasive plants.
- Attend or host a workshop, training, and/or webinar about invasive plant species, noxious weeds, and pests.
- Keep contact with the Yakima County Noxious Weed Control Board and WSDA about outreach efforts.



Puncturevine aka goathead (Tribulus terrestris) (Photo from Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board)

District Programs and Activities

District Operations

Goal(s): Provide training and ongoing education to District Staff and Supervisors. Continue to seek appropriate funding to enhance the long-range goals of the District. Work with other Districts and agencies to improve program efficiency.

Funding Source(s): WSCC, Local Assessment, potential future grants

Activities:

- Coordinate various District activities and programs in a timely manner.
- Complete Internal Audit (Schedule 22) yearly and review at a monthly Board Meeting.
- Complete and submit yearly State Auditor's Report.
- Supervisors complete at least one training session during the year (at WACD or a district's work/training day)
- Each staff member/supervisor to attend one training session (webinars or workshops)
- Review Annual Work Plan a minimum of twice per year.
- Review Long Range Plan yearly and update as necessary.
- Coordinate with other conservation districts and NRCS to enhance program efficiencies by attending Local Work Group meetings and South Central Area meetings.
- Update assessment data throughout the year and submit to Yakima County, as directed, to facilitate processing of District Assessment funding.
- Review and update existing policy manuals, personnel policies, RCW 89.08, agreements with conservation partners, and position descriptions for staff once per year.
- Participate in statewide committee work by attending at least one meeting.
- Develop and/or update training plans for supervisors and employees at least once per year.
- Assist cities, towns, ports, and other stakeholders with projects as needed.

Education and Outreach

Goal(s): Provide information and educational programs for the public, landowners, schools, and all others interested in protecting our natural resources utilizing in-house, hands-on, and web-based curriculums such as workshops, field days, and webinars.

Funding Source(s): WSCC, Local Assessment, potential future grants

Activities:

- Manage and maintain District website for public outreach and information on VSP, current issues, topics, and district programs as needed throughout the year. Update the website to achieve ADA Accessibility Requirements by April, 2028.
- Continue to work with North Yakima Conservation District, Benton Conservation District, and Franklin Conservation District to provide education & outreach programs such as Salmon in the Classroom, Heritage Gardens, and other programs within our district.

- Maintain awareness of water storage issues by attending at least one meeting concerning water storage alternatives. Promote the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan at a local and watershed scale.
- Work with the Yakima Valley Fire Adapted Coalition and other existing organizations to promote achieving greater effectiveness in addressing wildfire issues (currently no meetings). Regularly attend meetings and Participate in Community Wildfire Protection programs when offered.

Budget

Based on FY2025 (July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027)

Estimated Revenues	
Assessment Receipts	\$91,400.00
Grant Funds	\$477,071.77
Rent, Leases	\$26,159.00
Interest Earned	\$87.00
Inter-Seed Drill Rental Fees	\$16,566.00
Other	
Total	\$611,238.77

Estimated Expenditures	
Assessment Administration Fee	\$11,942
Education and Outreach	\$7,500
Employee Wages and Benefits	\$275,000
Property Tax	\$5,700
Dues	\$4,000
Administration/Operational Expenses	\$45,000
Cost Share	\$223,874
Engineering	\$26,906
Consulting	\$12,710
No-Till Drill Program Maintenance/Repairs	\$3,000
ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES	\$635,074

*Note: This annual budget was modified to try to reflect an annual budget. Some expenditures may appear inflated compared to revenues due to many of our grants following a biennial cycle.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

BLM – Bureau of Land Management

BMP – Best Management Practice

BOR – Bureau of Reclamation

CAFO – Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation

CAPP – Conservation Accountability and Performance Program

DNR – Department of Natural Resources

DOE – Department of Ecology

GWMA – Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Management Area

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service

RCO – Washington Restoration and Conservation Office

RCW – Revised Code of Washington

TMDL – Total Maximum Daily Load

VSP – Voluntary Stewardship Program

WDFW – Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

WSCC – Washington State Conservation Commission

WSDA – Washington State Department of Agriculture

WSU – Washington State University