



CLARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Five-Year Plan

2022-2026

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Organization of Clark Conservation District

Clark Conservation District is a voluntary and non-regulatory political subdivision of the State of Washington with authorities, powers, and structure contained in RCW 89.08.

The Clark Conservation District was first organized as the Clark-Skamania Soil and Water Conservation District due to a favorable referendum on October 10, 1942. The boundaries of the district covered all unincorporated areas of Clark County as they were in 1942. In 1969, the City of Vancouver petitioned the district to be annexed. A favorable hearing and referendum culminated in annexing Vancouver into the District on September 25, 1969.

On August 16, 1971, the name of the district was officially changed to Clark County Soil and Water Conservation District. On September 8, 1971, the area within Skamania County was annexed into the Underwood Soil and Water Conservation District. This change established the current boundaries of Clark CD – all of Clark County, except the incorporated boundaries as of 1942 of Camas, La Center, Ridgefield, Washougal, and Yacolt – all unannexed cities.

The district's name then changed to Clark County Conservation District following the passage of the 1973 Conservation District Law, which dropped "Soil and Water" from the state's districts in favor of "Conservation Districts." In December 1999, the district removed the "County" from its name and changed its name from Clark County Conservation District to Clark Conservation District.

Clark Conservation District is in southwestern Washington. Its boundaries are the Columbia River to the south and west, the Lewis River to the north, and the foothills of the Cascade Range on the east. The overall area is nearly 656 square miles, of which 28 square miles are water. Clark County is one of the most rapidly developing counties in the state, due in part to its proximity to the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area.

The work of the Clark Conservation District is directed by the Board of Supervisors and Associate Supervisors. The Board and Associates are local volunteers from the community. There are five voting Board Members, with three members elected by ballot and two members appointed by the WA State Conservation Commission. In addition, the district can have any number of volunteer community members as Associate Members.



Function of the Clark Conservation District

The function of Clark Conservation District is to obtain and coordinate technical, financial, and educational resources to support the needs of the people of Clark County in their efforts to voluntarily conserve and restore soil, water, and other natural resources.

Mission of the Clark Conservation District

Clark Conservation District works with individuals and communities to conserve and manage our natural resources through education and voluntary conservation practices for the benefit of present and future generations.

Vision for the Clark Conservation District

- We envision a district where our natural resources prosper for current and future generations through sustainable stewardship of our forests, farmlands, soil, water, and habitats across Clark County.
- We envision a culture of voluntary stewardship of our natural resources, built through relationships and partnerships.
- We envision being a well-known resource for the residents of Clark County.
- We envision having sustainable and consistent funding to achieve our mission.

Values of the Clark Conservation District

- We value helping people to conserve, protect, and enhance natural resources for current and future generations.
- We believe voluntary conservation programs should be locally-led, educational, economically feasible, equitable, and sustainable over the long term.
- We value increasing the viability of working lands for agricultural and timber production.
- We value serving our diverse community.
- We value honesty, integrity, and fairness in all we do.
- We value being financially responsible and accountable.
- We value fostering partnerships to leverage our resources and impacts.

Trends Impacting Conservation Within Clark Conservation District

- Nonpoint-source pollution impacts on water quality.
- Public awareness of natural resource conservation.
- Declining water quality and variable quantity.
- Increase in stormwater concerns.
- Rapid development impacts.
- Fragmentation and loss of agricultural land and natural habitats.
- Decreasing wetlands, prairie, riparian areas, and habitat corridors.
- Climate change impacts to the region's habitats, forest, and agriculture.



- Reduction in viable habitat access for healthy salmonid populations.
- Market access for locally grown products.
- Growing need for conservation and land management planning.

Priorities, Goals, and Strategies

Natural Resource Priorities, Goals, and Strategies

The natural resource priority areas for Clark Conservation District are:

- [Water Quality and Quantity](#)
- [Habitat Conservation and Restoration](#)
- [Producer and Working Lands Support](#)

Water Quality and Quantity

Water impacts every area of life, and improving this resource is paramount. Declining water quality and quantity stem from a wide range of sources, including stormwater runoff (nutrients, bacteria, sediment), increasing impervious surfaces (development), climate change, and habitat conversion (loss of riparian vegetation, forests, oak woodlands, pasture, etc.). Clark CD will work with district residents and landowners to implement conservation practices that improve the water quality and increase the water quantity in Clark County.

Water Quality and Quantity - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
1. Reduce surface and groundwater impacts due to land use practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide technical assistance and support in applying BMPs to agricultural and livestock land-use practices for landowners and operators, including riparian buffer plantings, fencing, mud and manure management and others as applicable. b. Provide technical assistance to complete riparian planting plans and provide funding to implement those plans to address water quality impairment parameters, including increased temperature, excess nutrients, excess bacteria; sediment; turbidity, and low dissolved oxygen. c. Provide forest management plans that improve and/or protect water quality in their designs.
2. Promote water quality and water quantity conservation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue Watershed Stewardship Program.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Public outreach via community-based social media, press releases, website and CCD email list, and print flyers. c. Promote canine waste cleanup campaigns and education. d. Provide education on stormwater management BMPs. e. Outreach to landowners for mud and manure management. f. Promote water conservation strategies, including residential water savings activities and updating agricultural irrigation systems district-wide.
<p>3. Implement a Pollution Identification and Correction program to identify and reduce nonpoint pollution sources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish and expand the Poop Smart Clark Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) Program with partners to implement water quality BMPs. b. Work with partners to offer septic system inspections and pumping rebates and provide funding as available to connect homeowners with the resources for repairs or replacement of faulty septic systems within 200 ft of surface water. c. Incorporate livestock management BMPs and agricultural technical assistance to improve water quality impacts. d. Develop and expand district-wide outreach as well as targeted outreach campaigns.

Habitat Conservation and Restoration

Resilient landscapes support natural systems that humans and wildlife both depend on. The landscape of our region is diverse and full of critical habitats and ecosystems. We educate and empower land stewards to conserve functional habitat areas and restore degraded landscapes. Clark CD’s goal is to maintain and improve local habitat ecosystems while promoting connectivity and inspiring stewardship to ensure viable and self-sustaining natural spaces and wildlife populations now and into the future.

Habitat Conservation and Restoration - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
<p>4. Work to restore degraded habitat County-wide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Work with local and state partners to secure funding for a district-led riparian restoration program.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Work with local and state partners to secure funding for pollinator habitat projects. c. Partner on or create programs with funding for upland wildlife habitat restoration. d. Partner on or create programs with funding for wetland habitat restoration. e. Cultivate landowner relationships and develop projects internally to meet landowner needs. f. Promote habitat connectivity and provide input to habitat conservation efforts in planning. g. Support landowner efforts for the creation of conservation easements through forest management plans.
5. Open two miles of anadromous fish habitat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Promote the Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP) and successfully complete three fish passage projects.
6. Promote the use of native plants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Hold the Annual Native Plant Sale - sell 75,000+ native plants by 2026. b. Support private land habitat conservation and backyard habitat programs
7. Support the management of invasive weeds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Maintain close working relationships with other entities engaged in invasive weed control and restoration practices to support the collaborative implementation of control plans and projects within the district. b. Add a weed wrench to the district's equipment rental program. c. Seek grant funding to expand on invasive weed education and mitigation projects. d. Adopt a systemic approach to education and solutions around weed management.

Producer and Working Lands Support

Rapid development and population growth have placed increasing pressure on the natural resources of Clark County. As one of the most densely populated and fastest-growing areas in the state, easily buildable flat farmland is in high demand in the area. Clark CD will continue expanding our offerings of technical assistance and best management practice implementation to land managers. We aim to promote viable agriculture, engage urban communities in small-scale agricultural opportunities, and encourage cooperation among stakeholders. By strengthening our connections with agricultural producers and regulatory agencies alike, we will continue serving as a trusted liaison between farmers and those agencies.



Producer and Working Lands Support - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
8. Promote sustainable farm management and soil conservation by providing conservation planning and funding for best management practices to land managers of agricultural operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide 300 site visits to agricultural producers. b. Assist producers in complying with local, state, and federal land use regulations and liaise between producers and regulatory agencies when requested. c. Develop 40 NRCS certified conservation plans. d. Provide or facilitate over \$1,000,000 in cost share for farmers by 2026.
9. Increase technical assistance to help forest stewards maintain healthy and economically viable forests and foster climate change resilience through forest health enhancement and fire hazard reduction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Secure funding for a permanent Stewardship Forester. b. Provide 400 site visits to forestry producers. c. Develop 100 forest stewardship plans with private landowners for forest management BMPs, including improving plant condition, habitat enhancement, sustainable harvest, wildfire prevention, and watershed health. d. Promote healthy forest management practices through participation in workshops and family-forest field day events.
10. Support the protection of critical working lands and help reduce land conversion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Work with new or established partners to facilitate one working lands conservation easement and work to develop an agricultural conservation easement program. b. Leverage expertise from partners to provide information and services to help farms and forestlands be more economically viable. c. Work with partners to provide education and resources to help landowners understand long-term conservation opportunities and successional planning. d. Support generational farming by ensuring that older generations of farmers have access to information on transitional planning and younger, diverse groups of farmers have the resources they need for successful agriculture in Clark County. e. Continue the equipment rental program and expand it to include temporary fencing.



<p>11. Support local food production, consumption, and appreciation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Strengthen partnerships with local organizations and support networking between producers and markets. b. Support community gardens, school gardens, home-based food production, and other urban farm operations. c. Implement conservation BMPs on four farms participating in food production within the urban growth boundary. d. Update the Clark Food and Farm Network website. e. Connect farmers to available resources to increase the viability of farming.
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Outreach and Education Goals and Strategies

Essential to the mission of Clark CD is providing information and awareness about the impacts and tools available to help with natural resource conservation. Working directly with residents and land stewards, sharing information and resources to help with voluntary conservation projects, and raising the broader public appreciation of resource conservation is critical to creating a sustainable and resource-rich district today and into the future.

Outreach and Education - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
<p>12. Increase the public’s awareness of the resources offered by Clark CD.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop targeted Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) campaigns. b. Redesign event displays and signage. c. Leverage our social media presence to build awareness of our work. d. Coordinate promotional presentations to diverse groups within the community (neighborhood associations, churches, community organizations, etc.)
<p>13. Provide education and solutions-based resources about natural resource concerns within the district and foster a stewardship ethic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Expand webinars and virtual workshops. b. Develop and offer workshops with requested topics to targeted audiences. c. Multimedia informational flyers d. Work with school districts to develop presentations and curriculum that can be used to engage students.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Engage individuals, businesses, and the community in active resource conservation efforts and practices. f. By 2026, reach 1,500 people annually with conservation education activities.
<p>14. Work to engage all members of our district by ensuring that campaigns and resources are accessible to all residents of our district in an equitable and open approach. Intentionally target underserved communities, particularly those most prevalent in rural areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Build partnerships with groups throughout Clark County, focusing on serving diverse populations, including historically underserved farmers, local tribes, racial and ethnic minorities, and non-native English speakers. b. Conduct internal trainings to ensure outreach is conducted in an inclusive and appropriate manner. c. Work with partners to develop effective messaging for target audiences. d. Develop relevant multi-lingual resources. e. Ensure the Clark CD website has up-to-date and accessible information. f. Conduct regular surveys to solicit input and feedback from community members.
<p>15. Promote public appreciation for local habitat areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop an appreciation campaign to develop personal ownership and pride in the local habitat areas of our county.

District Operations Goals and Strategies

Clark Conservation District’s operational goals center on developing and maintaining effective and efficient processes and procedures that support Clark CD’s programs. With our recent growth in grant funding and increasing number of staff members, solidifying the district’s operational procedures and processes is a critical area of focus for our Five-Year Plan. Priorities include ensuring that our financial processes function smoothly, transparently, and accurately steward public funds; and developing and maintaining strong grant reporting systems.

Providing the targeted levels of service Clark CD aspires to reach over the next five years will require strong operational capacity and support. For the upcoming five years, Clark CD is focused on refining the systems that will support staff and district operations to provide the best level of service to our communities.

District Operations - Goals and Strategies	
Goals	Strategies
<p>16. Secure long-term stable funding to assist the members of our district and achieve our mission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. By 2026, secure rates and charges, or an alternative stable funding source.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Promote public support from residents, landowners, and partners within the district (with education & outreach team). c. Work with a diverse set of partners to leverage funds and programs. d. Engage in long-term planning (5-15 years) to outline a long-term vision, including a funding strategy, appropriate staffing plan, strengthening diversity, equity, & inclusion practices, etc.
17. Improve data management and internal tracking systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop and expand the Smartsheet platform for programmatic and financial data tracking. b. Develop and expand the Smartsheet dashboard for grant tracking and management. c. Continue developing long-range budgeting tools.
18. Conduct transparent, accountable, and ethical operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. By the end of 2022, update the district’s policy manual. b. By the end of 2023, have clear technical, administrative, and human resource processes and policies documented for all standard operations. c. Hold fair and transparent elections.
19. Clark CD Board and Staff represent our community and have the capacity to support its needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure ongoing professional development for all staff positions, including DEI training. b. Develop and practice inclusive recruitment and hiring strategies. c. Hire to meet staffing needs identified in Staffing Needs. d. Cultivate a diverse group of active Associate Supervisors.
20. Hold and maintain the physical infrastructure and equipment to suit our growing staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Secure and furnish a physical location that will fit our expanded staffing levels. b. Maintain a sufficient number of reliable vehicles for staff.



Staffing Needs

Staffing Needs*			
Current Staff	FTE	Future Staffing Needs	FTE
District Manager	1	Executive Director	1
Grants and Fiscal Administrator	1	Fiscal Manager	1
Project Coordinator	1	Grants Manager	1
Conservation Specialist	1	Administrative Assistant	1
Livestock Conservation Planner	1	Conservation Program Manager	1
Stewardship Forester	1	Habitat Specialist	1
		Farmer and Farmland Specialist	1
		Livestock Conservation Planner	1
		Stewardship Forester	1
		Community Outreach Coordinator	1
		Engineering Technician	1
Total Current (as of Dec 2021)	6	Total by End of 2026 (5 additional)	11

*Note: Staff is not listed hierarchically.

Budget Needs

Historically, the Clark Conservation District has relied on unstable funding sources such as grants which severely restrict their capacity to serve the residents of Clark County based upon competitive grant funding alone. To meet the resource needs of Clark County, the Clark Conservation District will need long-term stable funding. Using the mechanism described in [RCW 89.08.405](#), conservation districts are authorized to propose a system of rates and charges to provide that stable funding source. A stable funding source will also provide a cash match for grants and significantly increase the probability of receiving grant funding. In most cases the, required match is 25 percent, thereby leveraging the grant funds at a 4:1 ratio. It is the intent of Clark Conservation District to greatly leverage local funds with state and federal sources to meet the needs of landowners and our partners.

Natural Resource Data and References:

The following are examples of the data sources and information considered by Clark Conservation District in identifying and addressing natural resource concerns - the list is not comprehensive.

[Clark County](#) is in Southwest Washington along the northern bank of the Columbia River. The district sits between the Puget lowlands and the Willamette Valley, the Columbia Gorge, and the Cascade and Coastal ranges. The variety of habitats and ecosystems interspersed with a mixed use of farmland, timberland, and population centers requires a team of district staff with a diverse set of abilities to serve its urban, suburban, and rural communities.



- Clark County covers 656 square miles, of which 629 are land and 27 of which are water. The most recent population estimate in 2020 is 503,311 people.
- The district is bordered by the Columbia River to the south and along the western edge of the county as the river winds towards the ocean (just over 100 river miles from the Pacific). Along the northern edge of the district is the North Fork of the Lewis River with its forestlands, river, and lakes. The eastern border is comprised of forested foothills shared with Skamania County.
- [Natural Resources Conservation Service State Resource Assessment 2012: Priority Resource Concerns.](#)
- See the Clark County GIS for an interactive map of Clark County land and water resources - [Clark County Maps Online.](#)
- Portions of every watershed in Clark County have water quality impairments, which include, but are not limited to, temperature, dissolved oxygen, bacteria (such as E. coli) pH, and fine sediment. These water impairments have resulted in segments being included in the [Department of Ecology's 303\(d\) listings.](#)
 - [Stream Health and Monitoring | Clark County \(wa.gov\)](#)
 - [Clark County Stream Health Report, 2010](#)
 - [Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board WRIA 27/28 Management Plan](#)
 - [Clark County Watershed Assessments and Stormwater Needs Assessments Program \(SNAP\) reports](#)
- Clark County's historically deep agricultural roots are being rapidly displaced for increased urbanization. Situated across the river from the neighboring metropolitan area of Portland, Oregon, Clark County is Washington's fifth-most [populous](#) county but the second most dense with roughly 800 residents per square mile.
- Clark County has several of the fastest-growing cities in Washington, the third-highest number of farms, and the highest farm density in the state.
- The soils of Clark County have been a draw to farmers over the centuries. The NRCS [National Commodity Crop Productivity Index](#) for Clark County is the highest in the state. The mixed farming practices and integrated markets near the urban centers mean the region is home to many private land operators and farmers. However, land use pressures and policies, among other exacerbating factors mean that the market value of agricultural products is significantly lower than the productivity scale predicts.
 - [2017 Census of Agriculture](#)
 - [Assessing Clark County's Agricultural Potential](#) (00:00 – 36:00 minutes)
- With 58% of Clark County covered in forests, it is home to thousands of acres of forestland, 80% of which is privately owned. These forests have been managed as timberlands for over a century, however many acreages require thinning and fuels reduction.



- [WA DNR Small Forestland Owner Demographic Report](#)
 - [WA DNR Report on Forest Land Conversion](#)
 - [WA DOR Property Tax Current Use and Designated Forest Land](#)
- Clark County is home to many historically anadromous fish-bearing [streams](#). These species not only serve as a totemic symbol of the region’s ecology and cultural history but also a keystone to the health of the region’s watersheds. Clark County is in the Lower Columbia Evolutionarily Significant Unit. Stream basins provide spawning and rearing habitat for five listed salmon or trout species.
 - [Federal Endangered Species Act \(ESA\)](#)
 - [Listed species believed to or known to occur in Clark, Washington \(fws.gov\)](#)
 - [Lower Columbia River Chinook Salmon | NOAA Fisheries](#)
 - The health and abundance of habitats and wildlife is an essential measure of natural resources by the district. Habitat loss can occur when areas are converted due to development or when unsustainable practices persist. The conservation and restoration of critical habitats and species are crucial.
 - [Habitat recovery and protection | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#)
 - [Wetlands - Washington State Department of Ecology](#)
 - [WISC - Washington Invasive Species Council](#)
 - Just as our area’s natural resources are critical, so too are the cultural resources of Clark County. The Native American tribes and original stewards of this land, the Cowlitz, Chinook, and Klickitat nations, thrived from the rich mix of natural resources. Later, immigrant settlements saw fur trade, farms, fisheries, and timber and the building of towns and early cities to the local community, and Fort Vancouver and the Hudson’s Bay Company drew an international community to the area. Some of the rich histories of the area are represented in our soils, and we must be aware that our work doesn’t impact the cultural history of our region.
 - [State Natural Heritage Program](#)
 - [Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation](#)

