



Facts on the proposed Conservation District 2008 Assessment

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Assessment Sought to Aid Conservation District

A new assessment proposed to go into effect in 2008 would provide Snohomish Conservation District with stable funding for its programs and services to residents. The District has offered natural resource-related services to Snohomish County landowners, farmers, and rural and urban residents since 1941. (Services to Camano Island were added in 1961).

Since those early years, the District has operated on very limited funding from the Washington State Conservation Commission in Olympia (which funds districts statewide), as well as many grants which have been awarded to the District from local, state and Federal sources. Grants, considered soft money, are generally geographically and task-specific and are not a stable source of funding for a mid-sized agency. Applying for grants also tends to tie up staff time that could be directed to on-the-ground improvements, technical assistance, and educational efforts. For some of the work SCD needs to do and areas that need assistance, there is no grant money available. Because of the difficulty and time-consuming nature of running an agency on grant funds, the Snohomish Conservation District Board of Supervisors has made the decision to seek a special assessment to implement district programs with long-term stability. Currently SCD is the largest district in Washington State without stable funding in the form of an assessment.

What is a Special Assessment?

Districts have authority under state law (RCW 89.08.400) to propose to their county government that a special assessment be added to the property tax on those lands within their jurisdiction that would benefit from district activities. The assessment can be between one and ten years in length. The process requires public input and Snohomish County Council approval before it can be implemented. Successive assessments may be proposed but each must be approved through this same process.

Why a Special Assessment?

By establishing a dedicated fund through special assessment to implement District services, landowners in Snohomish County will be able to rely more fully on Snohomish Conservation District to provide answers, technical advice, and assistance for their natural resource concerns. See the District website to review the draft proposal (www.snohomishcd.org).

How Will the Money be Spent?

Funds raised by an assessment will support offering technical assistance and educational opportunities to landowners. These funds would also be instrumental in leveraging additional funds from various sources and addressing previously unfunded resource issues particular to Snohomish County residents. Those additional funds would enable the District to offer

assistance to private landowners to restore habitat and improve streams on their property. In addition, the District would be able to work with cities and groups on urban conservation and expand its strong educational outreach.

Public outreach and implementation for urban areas could include: protecting backyard streams, low impact development (LID) techniques, establishing native plants, improving habitat, addressing water quality and quantity issues, urban forestry and sustainable living issues.

Public outreach and implementation for rural landowners could include: providing farm and natural resource planning services, addressing water quality and quantity issues, sustaining agriculture and preserving farmland.

Where Will the Money Come From?

Landowners within the District's boundaries would pay the assessment fee. The fee would be included on the same bill as their property tax. The proposed assessment is \$5 per parcel per year and \$.001 per acre.

What Does Snohomish Conservation District Do?

We work directly with landowners to solve site-specific natural resource concerns and implement best management practices. We partner with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to add to our extensive technical expertise. We also partner with Snohomish County, Department of Ecology, U.S. Forest Service, US Fish & Wildlife, and other agencies to implement projects.

To sum it up...

- ❑ We develop programs in direct response to local needs. We are not mandated by other agencies.
- ❑ We provide education and outreach on natural resource issues through workshops, fairs, school programs, tours, and more.
- ❑ **We are not a regulatory or enforcement agency.** Our programs are based on education and technical assistance through the voluntary cooperation of landowners.

For information on the assessment, contact Kim Levesque, District Manager, 425-335-5634, ext 107, or one of the District's Board members at supervisors@snohomishcd.org.