



Funding Proposal Will Protect Soil, Water, Forest and Farm Land

SCD 528 91st Ave NE, Ste A, Lake Stevens, WA 98258-2538
Phone 425-335-5634, ext 4 FAX 425-335-5024 Website: www.snohomishcd.org

Protecting Land and Water on Camano and Whidbey Islands

After more than forty years of working towards the protection and restoration of natural resources in Island County through grants and piecemeal funding, the Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD) and the Snohomish Conservation District (SCD) are seeking to stabilize their funding through a countywide assessment. Snohomish Conservation District added Camano Island to their District in 1961.



Even as conservation challenges increase, WICD and SCD are committed to providing free or low cost assistance in four main areas:

- **Conservation Planning and Technical Assistance**
- **Low Impact Development**
- **Promoting Sustainable Farm and Forest Lands**
- **Conservation Outreach and Education**

Funding for these services has historically come from grants in targeted areas of the county, which are becoming more difficult to obtain. Meanwhile, local, state, and federal governments have enacted increasingly complex regulations intended to protect these resources, such as Island County's new critical areas protection ordinance. These new regulations impose more restrictions on natural resource use and have further increased demand for all conservation district services. WICD and SCD provide free technical assistance, on a non-regulatory basis, to landowners to help them comply with county regulations. District services can also help residents meet their goals of protecting and enhancing water, soil, forests and farmland.

In order to meet the escalating need and to create reliable funding of their programs, Whidbey Island and Snohomish Conservation Districts seek to obtain an assessment, which will be a flat per-parcel fee of five dollars (\$5.00) plus a five-cent (\$0.05) per-acre fee. For example, a ten-acre parcel would pay \$5.50 annually. Conservation districts are granted the 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 lands within their jurisdiction that benefit from district activities. Thirteen districts in twelve counties in Washington State currently have special assessments.

Funding Local Programs

The total amount of revenue generated by the assessment will be approximately \$243,000. Revenues generated from Whidbey Island parcels will benefit WICD programming, while revenues from Camano Island parcels will support SCD activities specific to Camano Island. WICD and SCD will work closely to see that landowners on both islands receive the maximum benefits from the assessment.

With the assessment in place, the Districts will have the flexibility to provide services where they are needed in Island County instead of only where grants are available. The assessment will also increase the District's ability to compete for larger grant funding for Island County conservation efforts.

Benefits

Conservation District programs provide a broad range of benefits to Island County residents on a voluntary basis. Certified farm and forest planners and licensed engineers provide services free of charge. Best management practices (BMPs) exist for farm, forest, and residential lands to protect and enhance water quality, improve fish and wildlife habitat, and reduce stormwater runoff. In addition, the District can help landowners obtain funding from state and federal sources to install practices ranging from backyard rain gardens to livestock fencing. This provides long term benefits that continue over the entire life of the improvement.



Conservation Districts can play an important role in helping landowners stay in compliance with Island County's new critical areas ordinance. In fact, the Conservation Districts' role as a provider of certified farm planning and technical assistance services is written into the ordinance. Over 500 parcels of land in agricultural uses alone will be required to comply. The assessment will ensure the availability of staffing at the District to assist landowners with this and other resource-related issues.

The natural resource challenges facing Island County in the near and long term future are enormous and complex. Clean up of the Puget Sound, protection of the County's drinking water from salt water intrusion, and protection of habitat and critical areas are but a few of these complicated challenges. WICD and SCD's expertise and success in building partnerships between organizations, landowners, and other stakeholders will be indispensable in addressing and solving these natural resource issues.

Public meetings for the special assessment are scheduled for:

- **July 8, 3:00 p.m. at the Taylor Rd Fire Station, 2440 Taylor Road in Oak Harbor,**
- **July 8, 7:00 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist meeting hall, 20103 Hwy 525, Freeland**
- **July 20, 7:00 p.m. at the Island County Annex, Blue Building, 121 NE Camano Dr.**

Special Benefits Report

For a complete copy of *Whidbey Island and Snohomish Conservation Districts: Providing Special Benefits to Island County Land and Landowners*, a valuation report, or more information about the proposed assessment, contact WICD at 360-678-4708 or visit www.whidbeycd.org, or Snohomish Conservation District at 425-335-5634, ext 4 or www.snohomishcd.org.