



2019 ANNUAL REPORT

OUR MESSAGE

We all play a part in the health of our region's land and water.

As the new Executive Director of the Snohomish Conservation District, I am honored to follow in the footsteps of Monte Marti, a conservation leader who has served our region for over forty years. One of his accomplishments was building an excellent team here at the District. The staff are an incredible group of passionate and talented individuals focused on our mission to promote and encourage conservation and responsible use of natural resources.

With this report, I am excited to share a snapshot of our agency's achievements over the past year, and our vision for the coming year and beyond.

As we embark on a new decade, we are faced with new challenges. Increased drought and flooding, saltwater intrusion, and rising temperatures are impacting salmon recovery, farming operations, and the health of our forests. Our conservation efforts going forward will continue to focus on promoting soil health and sustainable agriculture; protecting water quality; restoring salmon habitat; and finding solutions for sustainable growth and a changing climate.

As one of the 45 conservation districts in Washington, our commitment remains strong to work with our communities across Snohomish County and Camano Island to ensure that what makes this place special, remains special. Together, we can make this community an even better place to call home.

-Linda Lyshall, PhD

YEAR IN NUMBERS

49,000 native plants sold at annual plant sale
25 community gardens assisted
125 farms* assisted
94,820 trees planted
86 events

16,500 gallons of rainwater storage installed
70,814 lbs of food donated
5,270 connections made
367 lessons taught for youth
962 students pledged to share what they learned



MAKING WAVES IN PUGET SOUND.

ONE DAY TO START A MOVEMENT THAT WILL LAST GENERATIONS.

Southern Resident orca populations are at a 30-year low.

We knew something had to be done to mobilize people into action. Together with conservation districts across the state, we created the region-wide event Orca Recovery Day. Over 100 partner organizations along the West Coast and British Columbia gathered together for 65 events that restored habitat, reduced stormwater pollution, and educated the public on daily things they can do to help. Governor Jay Inslee declared his support for the effort, officially proclaiming October 19, 2019 as Orca Recovery Day.

Throughout the Pacific Northwest, people came out to celebrate and honor the critically endangered orcas by installing native plants and restoring over eight acres of habitat vital to their primary food source, endangered Chinook salmon. In addition to restoring salmon habitat, rain gardens were installed to reduce stormwater pollution and thousands of pounds of trash were collected.

Over 2,300 people throughout the Pacific Northwest came out to celebrate and honor the critically endangered orcas, helping to install nearly 17,000 native plants and restore over eight acres of habitat vital to their primary food source, endangered Chinook salmon. In addition to restoring salmon habitat, rain gardens were installed to reduce stormwater pollution and almost 6,000 pounds of trash was collected.

One day isn't going to fix the problem. It's the actions each of us take every day, and the collective impact of those actions, that will recover the endangered Southern Residents. In 2020, we'll be ready for more.



REACHING ACROSS THE MAP

Working together for better ground.

Conservation districts are known for being leaders in natural resource stewardship. We aim to engage and inspire people who want to make an impact on their land, neighborhood and community, but are unsure of where to start. As the springboard of Puget Sound conservation districts, Better Ground was on the front line for some of our largest conservation efforts, including Orca Day.

This year, we connected people across Western Washington, some of whom never heard of a conservation district, with the right resources to get them started. Next year, we're confident we'll reach even more.

CREATING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES.

SUPPORTING OUR CLASSROOMS, STARTING WITH TEACHERS

The next generation is bubbling with questions

Sometimes, our educators need help answering them. In 2018, we were granted a portion of funding* called ClimeTime from the governor's office to provide climate science education to teachers throughout Snohomish County. Focusing on the biggest industry after aerospace, we used agriculture as an important local context to talk about the challenges that lie ahead.

For this ClimeTime initiative, our environmental education team created a curriculum package and training for teachers. The lessons include a short video that features

local farmers and the challenges they face due to a changing climate. Students also have access to modeling and maps generated from our Agriculture Resilience Plan to see the scientific forecasts for our region, as well as brainstorm strategies to help ensure local food security for years to come.

Our students will soon be our farmers, decision makers and world shakers. We can equip them with the right tools to be informed.



HELPING OUR FARMERS PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR THE FUTURE

We imagined our county without farming. We didn't like it.

The future is uncertain and never guaranteed, and that's especially true for our agriculture community. Since 2018, we've been developing the Agriculture Resilience Plan in partnership with our local farmers, and we're proud to say we finished it. The Plan provides a framework to help plan for resilient farming while facing both drier summers and wetter winters, as well as challenges that come with an ever-increasing population. It outlines strategies for farmland conservation, improved drainage, flood protection, access to irrigation, and other resilience practices.

By working together with our farmers and partners and the Sustainable Land Strategy (SLS) team, we can move towards finding innovative and practical solutions for our communities.

CREATING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES.



PROTECTING, RESTORING, MANAGING

Wetlands are the kidneys of Puget Sound.

These ecosystems not only provide habitat for our unique animals; they also purify surface water and help contain flooding during storm season. Our team is well acquainted with the wetlands of our region, but this year we accomplished something special. We leveraged funding from the Washington Department of Ecology and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to start a wetland project in Monroe three years ago with our Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew. The project had a relatively simple goal: improve water quality by increasing dissolved oxygen levels and decreasing temperatures in French Creek. To do so, we planted native trees and shrubs and removed invasive species that threaten the health of the ecosystem.

With its location right off of the busy State Route 2, everyday people saw riparian restoration in action. This type of exposure and riparian restoration captures perfectly what we try to accomplish with every project.

But we knew we wanted to do something more.

We took the project to Monroe students. In March, seventh grade students performed water quality tests on water that feeds into the wetland and compared it to data collected by Monroe's Stormwater Compliance Coordinator, Vince Bertrand. In the spring, the Monroe City Council picked from over 160 name submissions from Monroe students to officially proclaim the area as the Foothills Wetland Preserve.

In the fall, we partnered with Sound Salmon Solutions to offer field trips for Fryelands Elementary and the Environmental Science School. Students visited the newly named wetlands to put their own stamp on the restoration project by planting willow stakes.

Conservation happens in layers. While field work is a great way to showcase what we do, teaching others about the science and methodology behind our efforts is how we're going to build up future conservation leaders. Through integrating our separate teams in one effort, we can accomplish the best of both worlds.



Wetlands are important in Monroe because it keeps [our] environment clean and [our] animals alive. It also makes a really beautiful area to see."

- Ryan M., 7th grade

LIKE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

PARTNERING WITH LOCALS FOR A HEALTHIER PUGET SOUND

Inspiration can come from anywhere, but true innovation comes from within.

That's why we love working with everyday people who see an opportunity on their land and come to us for help. Several years ago, we worked with horse owner Terri Forslof after she purchased her equestrian property, a true fixer-upper that sat vacant for nearly a decade. After an initial site visit and assessment, Terri partnered with us on a cost-sharing project to build mud-free horse paddocks, an efficient waste storage and compost system, and some native vegetation planting for their pond. When the rain comes, she's ready.

This year, we got to see her host a farm tour to connect fellow horse owners with the resources and skills she needed for her own project. Our ongoing commitment to people like Terri- people who are willing to work for something better- is part of what defines our work at the District. Every success story starts with a cooperative landowner, and we're excited for the new connections we'll make with every workshop, site visit, and event to come.

“The partnership was everything we could have hoped for and more, and we are so happy to be enjoying our equines in a clean and efficient facility that doesn't damage our watershed.”

- Terri Forslof

PAVING THE FUTURE WITH INNOVATION, NOT ASPHALT

Urban doesn't have to be gray.

Paved surfaces like driveways, sidewalks and parking lots contribute to stormwater runoff because they can't absorb water. Our Veteran Conservation Corps (VCC) crew depaved 800 ft² of private property that poured runoff into the rest of the neighborhood. Working out the vision of our engineer Derek Hann who designed the project, they broke apart the pavement along the top half of the property, dug up tangled ivy and converted the hillside into a terraced garden. It only took 8 days to complete.

This is just one small drop in the bucket of work our VCC crew does every year. Made up entirely of U.S. veterans, they continue breaking ground by restoring habitat of our region and the greater Puget Sound.



34TH ANNUAL PLANT SALE

Climate is what you expect. Weather is what you get.

Every year, we band together with a crew of volunteers to create our largest event of the year: the plant sale. This year was no different, except for the massive snow storm that caused us to postpone our sale a week.

Our staff and volunteers worked with Washington State Fairground and local nurseries to manage thousands of plants that were ready to head out the door, yet couldn't.

The building our team worked in fluctuated between 20-30° F as they navigated a sale that housed the largest number of pre-orders we've had yet. Ultimately, over 49,000 native plants, crucial to the health of our Puget Sound, were saved, sold, and planted.

While it's just a native plant sale, at its core is a chance for us to connect people with adaptive, sustainable gardening, and present land stewardship practices for

CONSERVATION ACROSS CULTURE.



PROJECT HARVEST

Building community, one garden at a time.

We believe building better ground is more impactful when done through community. This is why we partner with organizations in the local food movement like the multi-ethnic Renew Church in Lynnwood.

Renew Church wanted to feed their congregation and community by growing food that's close to home, like pumpkins from Nepal or sorrel for classic Ukraine dishes. To help out, we donated lumber, vegetable starts, and native wildflower and grass seeds to support pollinators. The harvest of culturally-significant foods is used for the church's weekly food bank, while the garden serves to teach children and adults how to grow their own food. This is just one story of the many gardens sprouting up throughout the area. From apartment complexes to retirement homes, we'll continue championing personal and community agriculture by offering technical services to those who share our dream.

CELEBRANDO LA DIVERSIDAD. CELEBRATING DIVERSITY.

The most common non-English language in Snohomish County is Spanish.

Yet historically, we haven't had any way to bridge the language barrier gap. This year, we partnered with Washington State University to reach our Latino community. Through this grant, we were able to conduct several Spanish-speaking rain barrel building classes and give away native plants, as well as tour a rain garden that was built the previous year by volunteers.

“ Thank you for the services you gave to me - it was a great blessing. With my rain barrels, it helped me a lot by reducing my water bill. This year, I hope to continue to harvest.”

-Margarita Garcia Ocana, landowner

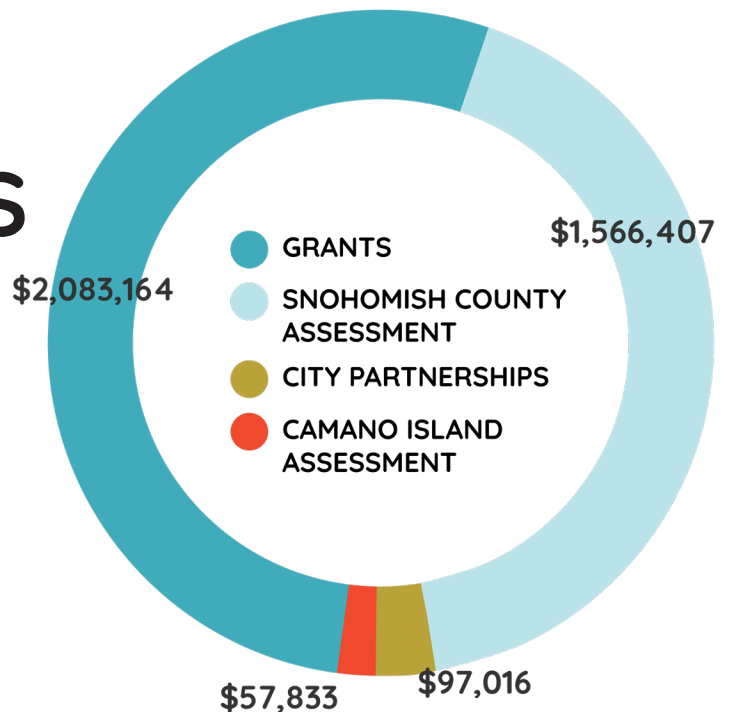
We know there's a greater need for broader communication in our toolkit. Snohomish County has the fastest growing non-white population in the nation. These are some who might not speak English, or speak it as their second language.

Everyone should have access to the tools and resources they need to better their land. With increased funding and a greater understanding of how we can best serve our community, we'll continue to expand our resources to reach more people who have historically not been heard.

2019 FINANCIALS

We continue to leverage this rate funding to secure local and regional grants, and make increased investments in the place we call home.

TOTAL REVENUE = \$4,070,335



PARTNERSHIPS

WORKING TOGETHER TO ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING BIG

Cultivating meaningful relationships is the core of our work.

Since 1941, we've worked with farmers, landowners, and residents on a voluntary basis to provide meaningful land and resource conservation across the region. None of our work could be implemented without the support and engagement of government and tribal staff and elected officials, non-profit organizations, schools and universities, and our citizens and land managers that work with us to make conservation happen on the ground.

