

SNOHOMISH



CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# 5-Year Strategic Plan

2023-2028

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This plan was developed with input from Snohomish Conservation District staff, board members, and community partners.

For more information about the District and the 5-year plan, please contact Linda Lyshall, Executive Director, at 425-327-9862 or [llyshall@snohomishcd.org](mailto:llyshall@snohomishcd.org)

## Organization of the District

The Snohomish Conservation District is a political subdivision of the State of Washington with authorities, powers and structure contained in RCW 89.08. The District was established in 1941 and serves the jurisdictional boundaries of Snohomish County and Camano Island. It is one of forty-five conservation districts in the State of Washington.

The District is governed by a 5-member, voluntary Board of Supervisors (Board). Three members are elected by local citizens within the boundaries of the District, and two members are appointed by the Washington State Conservation Commission. All five positions serve three-year terms. The Executive Director reports to the Board and oversees all District operations and personnel.

In addition to this 5-year plan, the District prepares an annual work plan that identifies the activities and budget of the District. The policies, programs, and activities approved by the Board are implemented by 40+ District personnel through strategic programming and funding.

## Mission

Snohomish Conservation District's mission is to work cooperatively with residents and partners to promote and encourage conservation and responsible use of natural resources.

## Vision

Collaborative partnerships and engaged communities working together towards resilient ecosystems, sustainable agriculture, and healthy communities.

## Guiding Principles and Values

We strive to ...

- Collaborate with individuals, communities, and partners to develop and implement strategic natural resource management plans and practices.
- Provide excellent technical and educational services to individuals, communities, and partners.
- Inspire and empower community members to become environmental stewards.
- Sustain a desirable workplace where people are passionate about their work.
- Maintain accountability and use public funds in a prudent and efficient manner.
- Demonstrate sustainable methods and practices, and serve as an example, in our day-to-day work and place.

We believe in ...

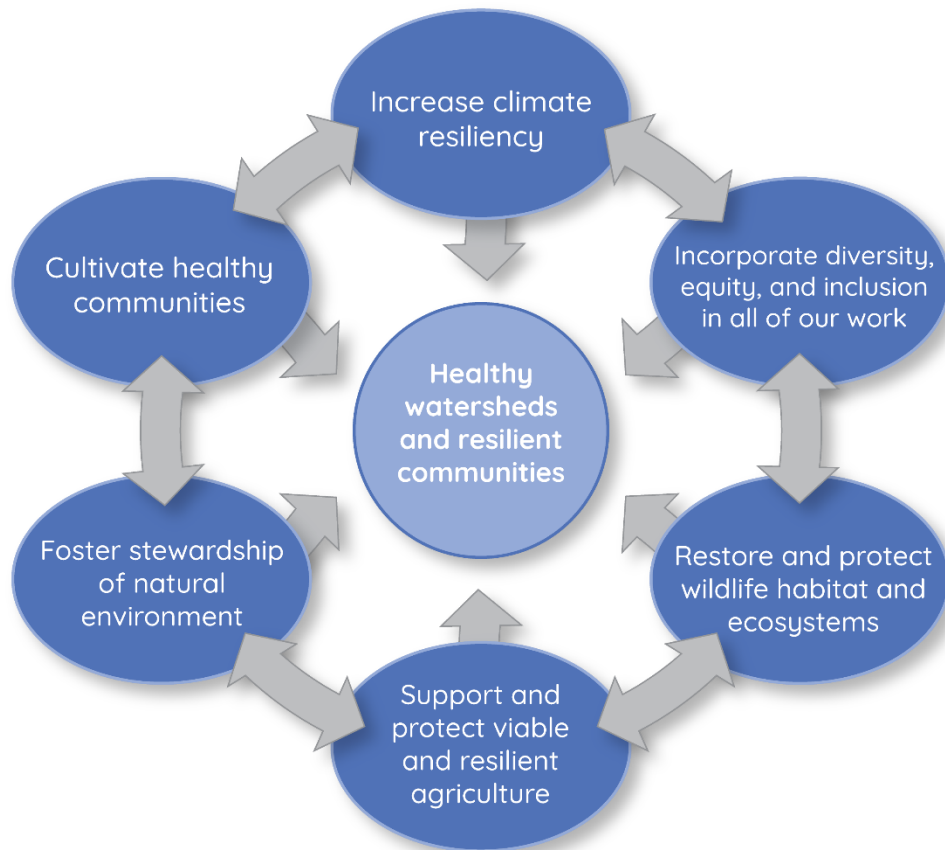
- Continuous improvement in all that we do.
- Innovative, voluntary, science-based solutions to address natural resource challenges.
- Equity through engagement and inclusion of all communities.
- Honoring indigenous knowledge and tribal treaty rights.

## Overarching Priorities

SCD's overall priority is to contribute to healthy watersheds with functioning streams, floodplains, riparian corridors, and refugia; abundant salmon and wildlife; and resilient communities with clean water, green spaces, and locally grown food.

Resiliency is about capacity to adapt and recover in changing and challenging conditions. Our work increases resiliency within natural systems and communities and helps them to thrive.

We focus our efforts in six key areas, as depicted below, which are inter-dependent and work together to reach priority goals.



## Overarching Priority: Increase Climate Resiliency

Climate change is one the greatest natural resource and societal challenges of our time. Climate resilience is managing and adapting to the impacts of climate change while preventing those impacts from growing worse.

### Strategies:

1. Incorporate climate adaptation, mitigation, and education in all district programs.
  - A. **Action:** Consider and incorporate climate actions in all restoration and agricultural plans and projects.
  - B. **Action:** Include climate education in youth and adult programs.
2. Increase landscapes' resilience to climate change
  - A. **Action:** Plant riparian and wetland forests in priority restoration areas.
  - B. **Action:** Retain beavers and their habitat through the Living with Beavers program.
3. Promote forest health and canopy cover.
  - A. **Action:** Deliver forest stewardship planning services to forest landowners.
4. Promote urban forestry
  - A. **Action:** Promote use of the Trees for Resilience tool kit.
  - A. **Action:** Collaborate with municipalities to seek funding and implement projects.
5. Promote carbon sequestration practices across the landscape
  - A. **Action:** Complete and implement carbon farm plans.
  - B. **Action:** Investigate and facilitate carbon market opportunities and partner with City Forest Credits and other entities to establish carbon sequestration projects.
6. Engage and inform decision making processes around climate change policy.
  - A. **Action:** Participate in comprehensive plan updates and legislative outreach.

## Overarching Priority: Incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in All of Our Work

Diversity is the presence of differences that enrich our workplace – a diverse workplace benefits everyone. Equity and environmental justice tries to correct societal imbalance by ensuring that access, resources, and opportunities are provided for all, especially for those who are underrepresented and have been historically disadvantaged. Inclusion is welcoming, supporting, respecting, and valuing all individuals and groups.

### Strategies:

1. Promote services to underserved communities, address environmental justice concerns, and increase accessibility for diverse populations.
  - A. **Action:** Investigate opportunities to add diversity, equity, and inclusion criteria to project prioritization, project implementation, and landowner outreach.
  - B. **Action:** Utilize socio-economic data to identify underserved communities and prioritize resources in those areas.
  - C. **Action:** Seek grant funding to address environmental justice concerns in urban areas.
  - D. **Action:** Evaluate our DEI efforts and build frameworks for incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion into technical service delivery and programmatic plans

- E. **Action:** Provide training opportunities for all staff and board members to increase our understanding of DEI needs and opportunities.
- 2. Engage, support, and collaborate with historically disadvantaged groups to support their efforts in natural resource management.
  - A. **Action:** Provide internship and training opportunities.
  - B. **Action:** Continue to collaborate with the Latino Educational Training Institute on projects and programs
  - C. **Action:** Continue to collaborate with Glacier Peak Institute on projects and programs.
- 3. Increase staff diversity to be more representative of the demographics of the county while fostering a culture of inclusivity and support.
  - A. **Action:** Enhance hiring practices to expand reach to diverse cultures and applicants with diverse backgrounds.
  - B. **Action:** Continue to promote a workplace where all employees feel valued and respected and encourage team members to be open about their thoughts on diversity and race.

## Overarching Priority: Restore and Protect Wildlife Habitat and Ecosystems

Our region is home to critical habitat and river systems that support numerous wildlife species. Dozens of these species in Puget Sound are classified as endangered, threatened, or sensitive, including several salmon species and Orca whales. We work with numerous partners to restore and protect habitat and contribute to recovery efforts for at-risk animal populations.

### Strategies:

- 1. Identify and implement multi-benefit projects that improve and protect wildlife habitat, restore floodplains, and improve resilience and viability of working lands.
  - A. **Action:** Research opportunities for an improved flood warning system.
  - B. **Action:** Continue to support Sustainable Lands Strategy and Community Floodplains Solutions agriculture landowner outreach and community building.
  - C. **Action:** Work with property owners in high priority areas to address natural resource concerns and build community.
  - D. **Action:** Deliver habitat restoration planning in Stillaguamish Confluence and Mainstem, Pilchuck River, Woods Creek, and Lower Skykomish.
  - E. **Action:** Continue planning and design for Swans Trail Slough Multi-Benefit Project to address agricultural drainage, aquatic habitat restoration, and flood protections in coordination with Chinook Marsh, a County led project, and local community.
- 2. Work with partners to protect critical habitat through restoration easements and habitat enhancement projects.
  - A. **Action:** Promote CREP and other restoration incentive programs.
  - B. **Action:** Provide education and technical assistance on how to improve wildlife habitat.
- 3. Protect and restore aquatic habitat and riparian areas.

- A. **Action:** Reduce water temperature, improve water quality, streamflows, and aquatic habitat through riparian and off-channel habitat restoration and beaver retention in priority reaches and sub-basins in priority watersheds.
- B. **Action:** Prioritize and remove fish passage barriers and reopen salmon habitat.
- 4. Increase overall forest canopy cover in the county through reforestation and afforestation programs. Engage with statewide forest health plans in planning and BMP recommendations.
  - A. **Action:** Encourage sustainability of forest operations and increase health of forest habitat through planning and BMPs.
- 5. Participate in planning and policy development with local and state agencies and leaders.
  - A. **Action:** Participate in salmon recovery planning, TMDL development, Sustainable Lands Strategy (SLS), and other natural resource conservation planning efforts.
  - B. **Action:** Participate in WACD and FbD Legislative Days
  - C. **Action:** Engage elected officials and staff through meetings and field trips

## Overarching Priority: Support and Protect Viable and Resilient Agriculture

SCD led the development of the Agriculture Resilience Plan to help ensure local agriculture remains a cornerstone of our way of life and value system in Snohomish County. Resilient agriculture is robust and adaptable to the accumulating environmental, economic, social, and institutional challenges of today's world. SCD supports an agricultural industry that is profitable, viable, and a good steward of the natural resources that it maintains.

### Strategies:

- 1. Increase agricultural resilience to climate change on priority agricultural lands
  - A. **Action:** Implement Agriculture Resiliency Plan through investments in multi-benefit projects including flood risk mitigation, drainage improvements, and soil health BMPs.
  - B. **Action:** Develop multi-benefit project design and implementation on farms and at the reach scale through collaboration with farmers, diking districts, counties, tribes, and other stakeholders.
- 2. Improve water quality
  - A. **Action:** Reduce bacterial pollution, nutrient, and sediment runoff by providing conservation technical assistance and helping to implement best management practices.
  - B. **Action:** Support the implementation of water quality improvement plans.
- 3. Promote voluntary, multi-benefit, working riparian buffers.
  - A. **Action:** Assist willing landowners to plan and plant harvestable agroforestry buffers.
- 4. Support agricultural producers in maintaining economic viability and adapting and utilizing new technologies and best management practices.
  - A. **Action:** Provide resource conservation planning, technical assistance, and financial assistance for BMPs, including soil health, nutrient management, water quality, and drainage.

- B. **Action:** Participate in development of Snohomish County Agricultural Strategic Plan and support agriculture viability monitoring matrix.
  - C. **Action:** Contribute to new crop variety research and development.
  - D. **Action:** Promote efforts to include consideration for agriculture viability in floodplain regulations.
  - E. **Action:** Support flood risk training for new landowners, including opportunities for improved flood warning systems.
  - F. **Action:** Support new and beginning farmers, including assisting with barriers such as access to farmland.
  - G. **Action:** Support development and use of Snohomish County's Food and Farming Center.
5. Contribute to farmland protection efforts in Snohomish County and on Camano Island.
- A. **Action:** Work with partners to identify and protect critical working lands through easements and acquisitions.

## Overarching Priority: Foster Stewardship of Natural Environment

Environmental education helps people of all ages gain better understanding of complex environmental issues confronting our planet. It contributes to increasing advocacy and building a foundation for identifying and implementing solutions.

### Strategies:

1. Improve community awareness, especially in underserved populations, of programs and resources SCD offers and increase understanding of the vital role conservation districts play within the community.
  - A. **Action:** Develop a Conservation Education Center with indoor and outdoor classrooms and demonstration practices to provide learning opportunities for youth and adult.
  - B. **Action:** Build relationships with elected officials and community leaders through presentations, field tours, and events.
2. Foster engagement throughout the region in conservation-related activities and choices that promote healthy ecosystems and communities.
  - A. **Action:** Engage the community members through volunteer projects and participation in district programs and services.
  - B. **Action:** Support and develop partnerships that allow SCD to broaden its impact in the community and further our goals to foster stewardship and community connections.
3. Improve youth understanding of the importance of conserving our natural resources, the benefits of engaging in nature, and the importance of agriculture.
  - A. **Action:** Deliver innovative, hands-on environmental education to youth throughout the district through field trips, service-learning projects, and Wheat Week program.
4. Increase public knowledge of conservation practices and tangible actions that can protect the environment.
  - A. **Action:** Provide adult education to broad and diverse audiences in multiple formats.
  - B. **Action:** Engage community members and provide educational resources at in-person and virtual events.



- C. **Action:** Reach community members with our monthly and quarterly e-newsletters and social media.
- D. **Action:** Continue the annual plant sale to provide low-cost native plants to regional landowners for carbon sequestration, climate resilience, and habitat benefits.

## Overarching Priority: Cultivate Healthy Communities

Cultivating healthy communities is about increasing access to nature and locally grown foods, improving water and air quality, reducing wildfire risk, facilitating renewable energy projects, and addressing environmental justice concerns.

### Strategies:

1. Increase urban agriculture and support food production within our communities
  - A. **Action:** Provide technical services to urban and suburban residents to build community gardens, prioritizing under-served communities.
  - B. **Action:** Partner with cities to create and sustain community food forests.
2. Reduce stormwater runoff and nonpoint source pollution and support jurisdictions in the implementation of their National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits.
  - A. **Action:** Install Green Stormwater Infrastructure, including rain gardens, bioswales, water catchment systems, and urban trees.
3. Reduce wildfire risk for neighborhoods in the wildland urban interface
  - A. **Action:** Provide wildfire risk assessments to residents and communities and implement chipper program to assist with brush removal.
4. Connect communities with nature and promote wildlife habitat in urban areas
  - A. **Action:** Provide technical assistance to residents to increase backyard wildlife habitat.
  - B. **Action:** Partner with cities to expand urban tree canopies to create green spaces, reduce stormwater runoff, sequester carbon, and improve the livability of the urban environment.
5. Support renewable energy for farmers and rural businesses
  - A. **Action:** Continue to implement USDA's Renewable Energy Development program.

\*Department Heads' names are in bold

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