

# King Conservation District

## 2015 Program Focus Areas – FACT SHEET

### OVERVIEW



**Challenge:** King County communities must develop resilience in the face of current and future population pressures and changing weather. King County and the Northwest find themselves facing dual challenges from climate change. As we adapt to more frequent and intense weather events and the everyday consequences of rainier winters and drier summers, we simultaneously must face that our natural resources and future climate are increasingly attractive to outsiders. We must plan not only for our climate to change but for a significant increase in our population as well.

**Need:** Programs and services that build community and environmental capacity to produce healthy food, expand forest resources and urban green infrastructure, improve and protect water quality, and create habitat will protect our region's quality of life now and into the future.

---

### The Problem

As the effects of climate change begin to be felt in common and extraordinary ways, our region and nation have begun to grapple with an environmental crisis of unprecedented proportions. Simultaneously, rising poverty rates and systemic obstacles create barriers to healthy fresh food for the region's low-income residents. Finally, population and development pressures have altered our natural environment to the brink – and sometimes beyond – of what our ecosystems can bear.

People in the Pacific Northwest have a love affair with the natural world – early in 2014, King County residents passed a \$400 million Parks levy dedicated to preserving, expanding, and maintaining the County's 200 parks, 175 miles of trails, and 26,000 acres of open space. We hold the quality of life we enjoy from our natural resources dear.

Those resources are at risk. Decades of inadequate funding and attention have left many of our state and local programs unable to meet the needs a growing population and a changing climate have created.

**Conservation Districts were created at the center of our nation's first national environmental crisis – the dust bowl.** Our unique mission places us squarely in the center of many human-natural resource intersections. It's our job to help people understand why a healthy environment is essential *to them* and then give them the tools they need to do something about it, especially on



the nearly 50% of land that's under their direct control. Growing stewards is what conservation districts do – wherever those stewards may be – on the farm, in urban backyards, or working alongside friends to restore a stream or park.

We provide broad messaging to elevate natural resource conservation among a diverse constituency. We teach workshops and host farm tours to bring essential information on stewardship to interested people. And we work hand-in-hand, often bringing financial resources, with landowners to help them steward natural resources on their land for the public's benefit. Education, technical assistance, and cost-share. It's how conservation districts help people build better ground.

In the face of climate change impacts, food production and access barriers, and development pressures on the natural environment, King Conservation District stands ready with our partners to leverage the region's existing expertise and passion for *this place* and make a difference.

## What's New

The 2013 King Conservation District/King County Conservation Panel and Task Force roundtables examined the region's existing programs and identified specific needs that were not being addressed in natural resource conservation. They directed the King Conservation District to develop proposals to create or expand our work in the following areas:

- **Rural Small Lot Forestry and Urban Tree Canopy Enhancement**
- **Regional Food System and Sustainable Agriculture**
- **Rural Farm Plans, Technical Assistance, and Regulatory Support**
- **Urban Farm Plans, Technical Assistance and Regulatory Support**
- **Shoreline and Riparian Education and Technical Assistance**
- **Expanded Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)**

In 2014, King Conservation District invited participants of the 2013 roundtables, plus a few new faces, to form a new **KCD Advisory Committee** and help us craft the future. Members and alternates include elected officials or senior staff from the following organizations:

City of Bellevue	King Conservation District	Seattle Tilth
City of Carnation	King County Executive	Sustainable Seattle
City of Issaquah	King County Council	Futurewise
City of Lake Forest Park	King County Agriculture Commission	Private Urban Landowners
City of Redmond	King County Forestry Commission	Private Rural Landowners
City of Seattle	Muckleshoot Tribe	
City of Shoreline		
City of Tukwila		

In the *Program Area Focus* fact sheets, KCD outlines the proposals it developed in collaboration with its Advisory Committee. In all, the new and expanded programs deliver nearly \$3M of resources to local rural and urban green infrastructure, regional food production and access, freshwater and marine shoreline restoration, and habitat expansion and protection. **We invite and appreciate feedback, suggestions, and questions through July 28, 2014. Please email: [Deirdre.grace@kingcd.org](mailto:Deirdre.grace@kingcd.org)**