



TALKING POINTS FOR WWA BOARD MEMBERS ON THE 2023 LEGISLATIVE BILLS REGARDING RIPARIAN BUFFERS HB 1215 & SB 5266

Local Legislators: Rep. Debra Lekanoff, 40th District, and Sen. Sharon Shewmake, 42nd District

**BILL SUMMARY:**

Riparian Grant Program. The State Conservation Commission (Commission) is directed to establish and administer a riparian grant program to fund the protection and restoration of critical riparian management zones.

Salmon Riparian Habitat Policy Task Force. A salmon riparian habitat policy task force is established in the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office. The task force must continue the work of the facilitated discussions on riparian habitat recommendations that were funded through the 2022 State Supplemental Operating Budget. The task force includes representation from the following entities:

- federally recognized tribes
- local governments;
- state natural resources agencies including Ecology, Commerce, WDFW, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Agriculture, the State Conservation Commission, Puget Sound Partnership, Recreation and Conservation Office, and the Department of Natural Resources;
- agricultural and livestock producers;
- salmon recovery organizations;
- commercial and recreational fisher organizations;
- business organizations;
- forestry and agriculture organizations;
- environmental organizations.

Interagency Riparian Committee. An interagency riparian committee is created within the Governor's Salmon Recovery

Office. The interagency riparian committee is responsible for interagency coordination on riparian protection and restoration, including meeting on a regular basis to accomplish the following tasks, among others:

- sharing data, mapping, monitoring, and adaptation strategies;
- developing a shared strategy for riparian protection and coordination;
- cooperating on riparian restoration projects and funding; and developing jointly with Indian tribes a permanent monitoring and adaptive management program that builds on the work done by the Commission as part of the riparian grant program.

Ecology, Commerce, and the WDFW must coordinate with each other and with other agencies on an effectiveness, monitoring, enforcement, and compliance program for critical area ordinances and other compliance with respect to protection of existing, fully functioning riparian critical areas. The interagency riparian committee includes the following members, among others:

- Governor's Salmon Recovery Office
- State Conservation Commission
- Ecology
- WDFW

The interagency riparian committee must invite engagement with, and coordinate work with, federally recognized tribes. The interagency riparian committee must also engage with nonprofit and business organizations.

**TALKING POINTS**

We OPPOSE this legislation as written because:

- 1) There is no language referencing or preserving the **Voluntary Stewardship Program** (36.70A.702 Revised Code of Washington) as a policy statement. We ask that rather than create a new program, you fully fund and enhance VSP.
  - a) Processes and committees established by HB 1215 are currently embedded within VSP, and offer ample opportunity for technical feedback and direction to both watershed and implementation.
  - b) Enacting duplicative restoration or stewardship programs does little to improve coordination, funding, and momentum.
- 2) **Agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation canals, levees, dikes and drainage ditches** must be excluded from any riparian zones.
- 3) The reference to and reliance on **WDFW's Riparian Ecosystems Volumes 1 and 2 as the "best available science" is inappropriate** and creates ambiguity with respect to riparian habitat regulation on agricultural lands.
- 4) Requiring **County Conservation Districts to share landowner data** with regulatory entities and other organizations is a breach of trust and a violation of voluntary goodwill.
- 5) Without a clear and mutually agreed upon **definition of success** among stakeholders there will be very little trust gained within the private land and farming community.
- 6) The **funding for a program of this magnitude is too small** as the program will be expected to reimburse farmers for land value, future production loss, and the management of riparian areas.
- 7) We require a **WSDA representative** on the interagency riparian committee.