



# **Thurston Conservation District 2026–2030 & Beyond Strategic Plan**

Vision | Strategy | Impact

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## 1. Mission and Vision

**Mission:** To protect and enhance the farms, forests, and natural landscapes of Thurston County.

**Vision:** Healthy lands, thriving communities, and a sustainable future for all.

Thurston County residents envision a future where forests, farms, and waters are protected, climate resilience is built into daily life, everyone has access to land and food, and conservation is a shared community value led by strong local leadership.

By 2045, Thurston County is home to thriving farms, forests, and waterways. Communities and partners collaborate across boundaries to address climate change, protect working lands, and ensure that future generations inherit a resilient, healthy landscape.

## 2. Core Values

Voluntary Stewardship: Care for people and planet, in partnership with each other.

Integrity: Build trust through transparency and accountability.

Innovation: Adapt and evolve to meet emerging challenges.

Collaboration: Work together across communities and sectors.

Equity: Ensure all have access to the benefits of conservation.

Learning: Commitment to continual education of community and ourselves.

## 3. Key Methods Framework

Key Method	Outcome	Success Indicators
1.) Protect and Restore	Protect natural resources and enhance the natural landscape.	acres conserved, projects completed, improved habitat, protected farm and forest land
2.) Build Resilience	Support climate adaptation and community preparedness.	Regenerative practice integration, disaster preparedness planning
3.) Create Community	Strengthen stewardship and access to resources and learning.	Increased event and program participation, community engagement and advocacy
4.) Invest in Excellence	Foster a healthy, growth-oriented and innovative workplace.	High staff retention, diversification of funding

## 4. Strategic Priorities and Goals

### **Priority 1: Protect and Restore Natural Resources**

Thurston County's landscapes are the foundation of our region's environmental health and community well-being. These natural systems face growing pressure from population growth, land conversion, and climate-driven impacts. Strengthening land-use policies ensures growth happens responsibly and protects the character and function of rural spaces. Safeguarding working lands, salmon-bearing streams, and critical habitats preserves the ecological integrity that supports local livelihoods and the region's cultural heritage. By advancing watershed health and investing in water quality improvements, we set the stage for long-term resilience - ensuring clean water, thriving wildlife, and productive land for generations to come. This priority is about stewardship at the landscape scale, restoring balance where it has been lost and protecting the natural assets that shape the region's identity.

*Goal 1:* Strengthen long-term land use policies to prevent overdevelopment and sprawl.

*Goal 2:* Prioritize protection of forests, farmlands, wetlands, and salmon-bearing streams.

*Goal 3:* Advance watershed health, water quality improvements, and habitat restoration.

### **Priority 2: Build Climate Resilience and Disaster Preparedness**

Communities across Thurston County are already experiencing the tangible effects of a changing climate: drier summers, heavier winter storms, increased wildfire risk, and uncertain water supplies. By integrating climate-smart farming and conservation practices, we help safeguard future food and water security while supporting producers adapting to new conditions. Green infrastructure and improved stormwater management reduce pollution and protect neighborhoods and ecosystems from flooding and runoff. At the same time, expanded wildfire prevention, education, and mitigation efforts build community readiness and reduce risk to lives, property, and natural resources. This priority equips the county to not just withstand climate impacts, but to emerge stronger, more adaptable, and more unified in the face of change.

*Goal 4:* Integrate climate-smart farming and conservation practices to ensure future food and water security.

*Goal 5:* Promote green infrastructure, stormwater management, and pollution prevention.

*Goal 6:* Expand wildfire prevention, education, and fire mitigation practices.

### **Priority 3: Create Community, Access, and Equity**

Healthy ecosystems and opportunities to connect with land should be accessible to everyone. Many of our local communities still face barriers to participating in conservation, gardening, farming, and outdoor experiences. Increasing access to land, food, and gardens empowers underserved residents

and strengthens local food systems. Supporting community-led conservation ensures that strategies reflect cultural knowledge, lived experience, and local priorities. This priority promotes belonging, health, and shared stewardship across the county by cultivating places where gardens, farms, and natural spaces become everyday resources. It reflects a commitment to ensuring that the benefits of conservation are felt broadly, equitably, and meaningfully.

*Goal 7:* Increase access to land, food, and gardens for low-income and underserved communities.

*Goal 8:* Support community-led conservation and culturally relevant engagement.

*Goal 9:* Build opportunities where gardens, farms, and natural spaces are everyday resources for all.

#### **Priority 4: Invest in Organizational Excellence and Leadership**

To meet the tremendous need of our local conservation and community challenges, Thurston Conservation District must operate as a strong, innovative, and collaborative leader in the region. Strengthening leadership roles and deepening policy collaboration positions the district as a trusted convener on issues that cross jurisdictional and environmental boundaries. Investing in staff and board capacity builds the technical excellence required to serve a rapidly growing and diversifying community. Securing sustainable funding allows programs to expand, adapt, and endure. This priority acknowledges that strong internal systems and visionary leadership are the backbone of all conservation work and essential to achieving the shared goals of a resilient, thriving Thurston County.

*Goal 10:* Be a leader in conservation and facilitate regional policy collaboration.

*Goal 11:* Increase organizational, board and staff technical capacity to meet growing community needs.

*Goal 12:* Secure sustainable funding to maintain and grow programs.

### **5. Key Initiatives and Actions**

- Grow the District to meet the needs of community and partners, ensuring organizational capacity to address local resource concerns.
- Generate sufficient and stable funding to address local priorities with consistency and appropriate capacity.
- Create a Conservation and Education Center to convene and educate community members and partners, demonstrating the power of voluntary stewardship.
- Demonstrate the power of voluntary stewardship and the efficacy of collaborative land stewardship by telling the stories of success of conservation on the ground.
- Emerge as regional leaders in farm and forest land preservation, secure resources to create a fully functional farmland preservation program in Thurston County and fund easements and acquisitions of farm and other working lands.

- Anchor learning for the next generation through research-driven conferences, expert-led workshops, and teacher professional development.

## 6. Performance Indicators and Measurements of Success

Measuring outcomes is central to demonstrating accountability, improving effectiveness, and telling the story of our collective impact. Thurston Conservation District will use clear, consistent, and transparent indicators to track progress toward its strategic goals and adapt to emerging challenges over time.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Metric</b>	<b>Measurement Impact</b>
<i>Acreage in Long-Term Stewardship</i>	% of acres	Captures tangible contribution to ecosystem health and working lands regeneration, spanning forests, farmlands, wetlands, and riparian areas.
<i>Number of Community Members Involved in Voluntary Stewardship</i>	# of community members	Tracks how deeply the community is connected to conservation, from workshops to on-the-ground actions, a cornerstone of TCD’s voluntary stewardship approach.
<i>Total Conservation Funding Leveraged and Invested Locally</i>	\$ invested	Demonstrates economic and community value to connect public investment directly to on-the-ground conservation outcomes.
<i>Organizational Excellence and Capacity</i>	Overall financial health analysis	Measures TCD’s internal strength that is essential for sustaining long-term impact and innovation.

### Key Performance Indicators:

Thurston Conservation District’s Key Performance Indicators provide a clear framework for measuring the progress and impact of this Strategic Plan. These indicators translate long-term goals into tangible results that can be monitored, evaluated, and communicated with transparency to our community, partners, and funders.

#### 1. Acreage in Long-Term Stewardship

Measures the percentage of Thurston County’s priority lands actively restored, enhanced, or under long-term stewardship (including riparian buffers, wetlands, farmlands, and forests):

- Acres actively being restored by TCD programs and support
- Lands incurring long-term stewardship and enhancement
- Projects in the planning and development phases for restoration and enhancement

#### 2. Number of Community Members Involved in Voluntary Stewardship

Tracks the number of residents, landowners, volunteers, and students participating in voluntary conservation and stewardship activities supported by TCD:

- Numbers of people implementing conservation practices
- Attendees at educational events
- Students served through lessons and field trips

### 3. Total Conservation Funding Leveraged and Invested Locally

The total dollar amount of funding, grants, and partner investments that Thurston Conservation District secures or channels into local conservation, restoration, and climate resilience projects:

- Competitive grants (state, federal, private foundations)
- Partner contributions and cost-share programs
- Technical assistance and incentive program funds delivered to landowners
- In-kind match or direct investment mobilized through TCD-led initiatives

### 4. Organizational Excellence and Capacity

Evaluates TCD's long-term financial and operational resilience, combining revenue diversity, fiscal stability, and staff capacity:

- Balanced annual budgets and clean audits
- Revenue diversification and longevity (% of diversification)
- Operating reserves maintained at healthy levels (3–6 months)

## **Integration with the Annual Plan**

Each year, TCD develops an Annual Plan that directly aligns with the Strategic Plan's priorities and Key Performance Indicators.

The Annual Plan:

- Translates multi-year goals into specific, achievable annual objectives
- Identifies key projects and initiatives that advance strategic targets
- Sets annual performance benchmarks for each performance indicator, ensuring continuous progress toward strategic outcomes and vision
- Highlights opportunities to adapt or refine metrics based on new data, community needs, and environmental conditions

This annual alignment process ensures that TCD remains adaptive, data-driven, and accountable — balancing long-term vision with practical action. Each year builds upon the last, allowing for iterative learning, innovation, and collaboration.

## **Telling the Story of Impact**

Beyond numbers, success is measured through the stories and relationships that reflect real-world change.

TCD will pair data with community narratives showcasing the people, places, and partnerships behind the metrics.

Each year, the Annual Report will highlight:

- Progress against strategic goals
- Emerging trends and innovative approaches
- Testimonials from partners and landowners
- Visual maps and graphics illustrating measurable impact

## **7. Timeline and Milestones**

### **Phase 1: Launch and Foundation (2026)**

Focus: Establish systems, baselines, and partnerships.

- Develop Annual Plan format linking strategic plan priorities and performance indicators to yearly work plans.
- Build internal data dashboards to track metrics (funding, acres, participation, etc.).
- Conduct baseline assessments for: % acres in restoration, community participation in voluntary stewardship
- Secure initial multi-year conservation funding commitments.
- Identify pathways to accomplish key actions and initiatives.
- Assess capacity and organizational needs to achieve strategic plan goals.

### **Phase 2: Implementation and Scaling (2027–2028)**

Focus: Deliver measurable impact and develop programs.

- Publish first Annual Report with new performance metrics, stories, maps and testimonials.
- Increase conservation investment by Thurston County.
- Achieve measurable improvements in restoration, voluntary stewardship and community engagement.
- Strengthen internal systems, technologies and tools to support organizational excellence (data tracking, policies and procedures, human resources)
- Prioritize professional development and training to demonstrate leadership in natural resources related fields.
- Begin development of the Conservation and Education Center.
- Secure long-term partnerships and funding opportunities to align with TCD's long-term vision for the future.

### **Phase 3: Integration and Resilience Building (2029–2030)**

Focus: Deepen partnerships and embed conservation into community systems.

- Integrate climate adaptation planning with local jurisdictions and tribal governments.
- Evaluate and update outreach methods for inclusivity and cultural relevance.
- Host regionally renown conferences and events at the Conservation and Education Center.
- Tell data-driven success stories using key and supporting performance indicators that demonstrate significant progress on our strategic goals.

### **Phase 4: Evaluation and Renewal (2030)**

Focus: Measure, communicate, and refresh the strategy.

- Conduct comprehensive impact assessment of strategic plan priorities, goals and measures of success.
- Document measurable improvements in:
  - Natural resources protection and enhancement
  - Community engagement
  - Financial leverage
  - Climate resilience metrics
- Engage the community and partners in developing Vision 2045 successor plan.
- Publish TCD 2030 Outcomes and Next Decade Vision report.

## **8. Evaluation and Adaptive Management**

Evaluation is integrated into TCD’s culture of continuous improvement and accountability:

Program level: Monitoring data, staff reports, and partner feedback are generated to observe project performance and annual plan activity outcomes.

Organizational level: Department feedback is provided through leadership team, along with board self-assessment, to ensure goals around capacity, resources and culture are met.

Strategic level: Key performance indicators and external feedback ensure goals are achieved to make long-term impact and TCD’s vision for the future is realized.

#### **Adaptive Management Cycle:**

1. *Plan*: Establish clear metrics and baselines.
2. *Implement*: Execute programs and monitor results.
3. *Evaluate*: Assess performance through quantitative and qualitative data.

4. *Learn*: Identify lessons, best practices, and innovations.
5. *Adapt*: Adjust strategies, reallocate resources, or refine objectives based on findings.

By embedding learning, communication, and engagement into every stage of the strategic plan, TCD ensures that our work remains responsive, credible, and community-driven — delivering tangible, lasting benefits for the lands and waters of Thurston County.

## 9. Long-Term Financial Strategy: Guiding Principles

These are the guiding financial principles to foster a successful long-term financial strategy. A strong financial strategy is the foundation for sustaining and advancing the mission of the Thurston Conservation District. It ensures that our organization remains resilient, adaptive, and capable of delivering long-term impact in service to our community and natural resources.

### **Strategy 1: Align Finances with Mission and Vision**

- Ensure spending and revenue decisions directly support organizational priorities.
- Avoid “mission drift” by funding only programs that advance core objectives.

### **Strategy 2: Take a Long-Term View**

- Plan 5–10 years ahead, not just annually.
- Model different financial scenarios to anticipate changes in funding, costs, and priorities.

### **Strategy 3: Maintain Financial Sustainability**

- Build and maintain adequate reserves for emergencies and opportunities.
- Avoid relying too heavily on one funding source—diversify revenue streams.

### **Strategy 4: Prioritize Stability Over Short-Term Gains**

- Avoid high-risk financial decisions that could destabilize the organization.
- Balance innovation with risk management.

### **Strategy 5: Use Data-Driven Decision Making**

- Base projections on realistic, evidence-based assumptions.
- Regularly review actual vs. budgeted results to improve forecasting accuracy.

### **Strategy 6: Be Transparent and Accountable**

- Clearly communicate financial plans and performance to stakeholders.
- Document how financial decisions are made and by whom.

### **Strategy 7: Build in Flexibility**

- Allow room to adapt to funding changes, economic shifts, or unexpected events.
- Incorporate contingency planning.

**Strategy 8: Support Capacity and Growth**

- Invest in staff, infrastructure, and systems that improve efficiency and impact.
- Allocate resources to develop future revenue-generating opportunities.

**Strategy 9: Evaluate Return on Investment (ROI)**

- Consider both financial and mission-related returns.
- Prioritize programs that deliver measurable benefits for the cost.

**Strategy 10: Commit to Regular Review and Adjustment**

- Treat the financial strategy as a living document.
- Review annually (or more often) to keep it relevant.

**10. Long-Term Vision and Goals**

**Vision for 2045 and Beyond**

Thurston County thrives as a connected landscape where healthy forests, farms, waters, and communities sustain one another for generations to come.

Thriving natural systems, resilient communities, and an engaged public work together to conserve the region’s most vital resources — ensuring clean water, productive soils, abundant wildlife, and climate resilience across every watershed.

Thurston County has a vibrant food and farm economy. The amount of land in working agriculture has increased in both urban and rural areas. Our region has sufficient processing and market infrastructure to keep locally grown food in our communities and access to fresh healthy food is available to all residents.

Our Conservation and Education Center will be known as a regional hub of information, expertise and resources that further the impact of voluntary conservation.

The Thurston Conservation District continues to thrive as a strong leader improving the landscape, resources and health of our community. We have adequate and stable funding to continue to meet local priorities and support regional goals that are innovative and forward-thinking. We plan for the health and wellbeing of generations to come by leading a community-wide movement of stewardship, where conservation is not a program, it’s a shared way of life.

**The Future We’re Building**

<b>Resilient and Regenerative Landscapes</b>	<b>Climate-Ready Communities</b>	<b>Engaged and Empowered Communities</b>	<b>Leadership and Innovation</b>
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Working lands preserved for future generations.	Natural climate solutions are embedded in local planning.	Conservation education embedded in every school.	Stable, diversified funding supports innovation.
Farms use regenerative soil health and water-efficient practices.	Farms and forests operate as carbon sinks.	Diverse community participation in stewardship.	Recognized regional leader in conservation excellence.
Local food systems are resilient and stable.	Communities equipped to respond to climate impacts.	Strong partnerships among agencies, tribes, and nonprofits.	
Endangered species have recovered, and ecosystems are restored.		Equitable access to local food and clean water for all.	

### Pathway to 2045

Thurston County thrives as a connected landscape — where healthy forests, farms, waters, and communities sustain one another for generations. Conservation is a shared way of life, built on collaboration, stewardship, and innovation.

Phase I (2025–2030): Build strong foundations — programs, partnerships, and capacity.

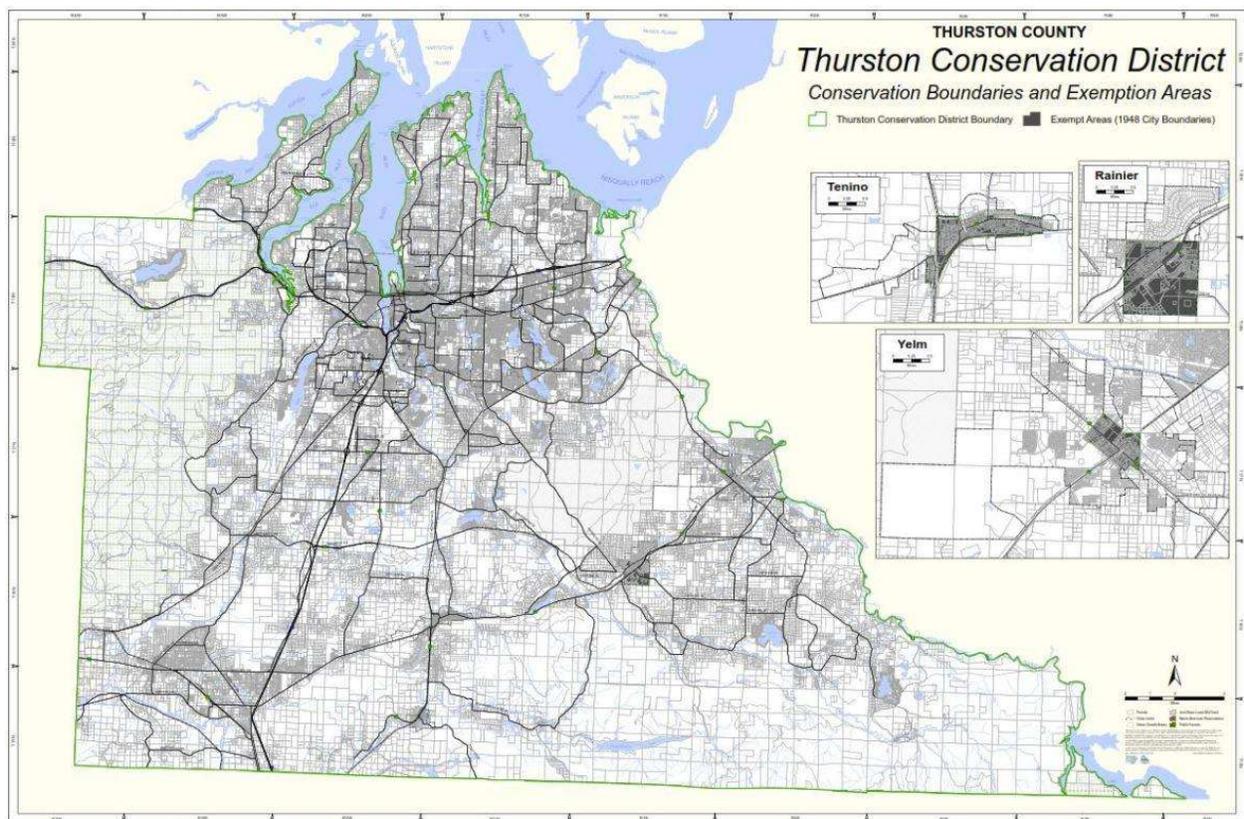
Phase II (2030–2035): Scale innovation, expand resilience, and deepen engagement.

Phase III (2035–2045): Achieve enduring landscape and community transformation.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Conservation District Foundation and History

Thurston Conservation District (TCD) was founded in 1948 according to the powers and duties governed by [RCW 89.08](#). The function of TCD is to obtain and coordinate technical, financial, and educational resources, supporting the people of Thurston County in their efforts to conserve and restore soil, water, and other natural resources.

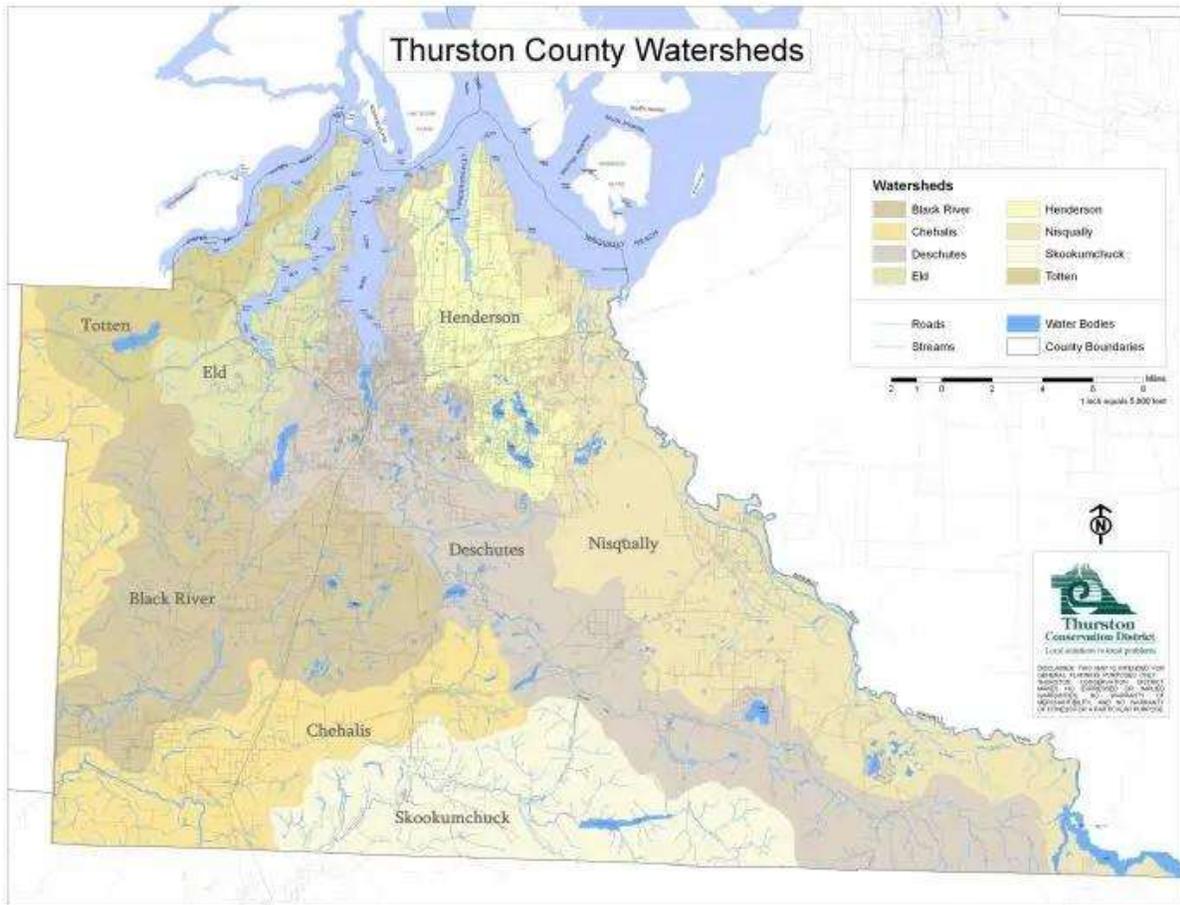


Thurston Conservation District covers the majority of Thurston County, excluding the 1947 boundaries of Yelm, Rainier and Tenino (shown above).

**Land Recognition:** Thurston Conservation District serves community members who reside on the Indigenous Lands of the Nisqually, Squaxin, and Chehalis Peoples. We give thanks for their Indigenous knowledge and leadership in our shared work of stewarding this place for present and future generations.

## Appendix 2: Thurston County Data and Characteristics

Thurston County is located on the southern end of the Puget Sound in Western Washington, referred to as the South Sound. It covers 774 square miles, of which 722 square miles is land and 52 square miles is water. Thurston County is the seventh smallest county in the state, but the sixth most populous with 294,793 people county-wide (408 people per square mile).<sup>1</sup>



Waters within the district drain to both the Puget Sound and the Pacific Ocean. They are conveyed via the major watersheds, including Black River, Budd Inlet, Deschutes River, Chehalis River, Eld Inlet, Henderson Inlet, Nisqually River, Skookumchuck River, and Totten Inlet.

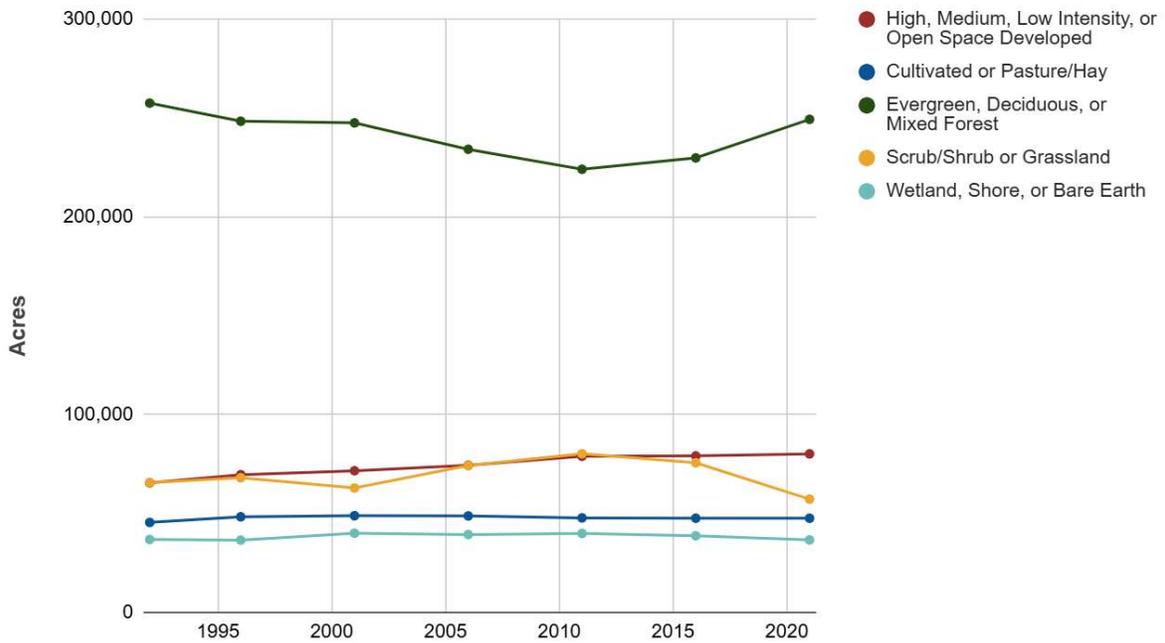
### Land Cover in Thurston County

Forests cover over 50% of the county's area. Grassland and scrub/shrub cover 12% of the county's area. Farm and cultivated lands, including pasture/hay cover 10%. As of 2021, approximately 6.5% of Thurston County was covered by impervious surfaces.

<sup>1</sup> 2020 Census: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/washington.html>

Roughly 500 acres per year have been converted to low, medium, or high-density development since 1992.<sup>2</sup>

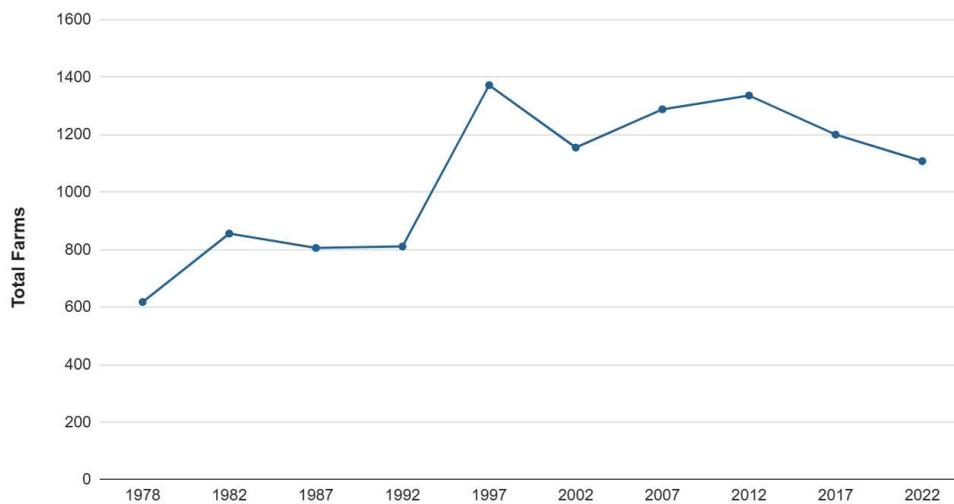
### Thurston County Land Cover



### Farms and Farmland Loss

Thurston County has 1,108 farms (228 less than 2012), with a total of 55,943 acres in farms (20,695 less than 2012) and an average size of 50 acres. Over 50% of farms are less than 14 acres, and 78% are under 50 acres.

### Number of Farms in Thurston County



<sup>2</sup> Thurston Regional Planning Council: <https://www.trpc.org/434/Land-Cover-and-Impervious-Surfaces>

Thurston County is the 8<sup>th</sup> highest overall livestock and poultry producer in Washington State, the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest producer of poultry and eggs and the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest producer of aquaculture products.

The total market value of agricultural production in Thurston County has increased to about \$190 million. Market values of livestock and poultry products have doubled in value since 2012, accounting for 79% of the total value of agricultural products in Thurston County, while crops account for 21%. Thurston County's highest valued agricultural products are poultry and eggs, accounting for nearly 50% of all livestock and poultry sales, while nursery/greenhouse/sod generates the highest value of crop-related sales, accounting for 61% of total sales.

Income from farming operations as a whole has decreased by 13%, while the cost of production has increased by 11%.<sup>3</sup>

Additional useful agricultural census data: [2022 Census of Agriculture Thurston County Profile](#)

### **Working and Non-working Forestland**

Thurston County has approximately 329,638 acres of forestland. 82% of total forestland within the county is working forests, while 18% are either protected or otherwise considered non-working forests. 74% of forestland within Thurston County is privately owned, while the remaining 26% are owned by federal, state, local and tribal governments.<sup>4</sup>

### **Watershed Health**

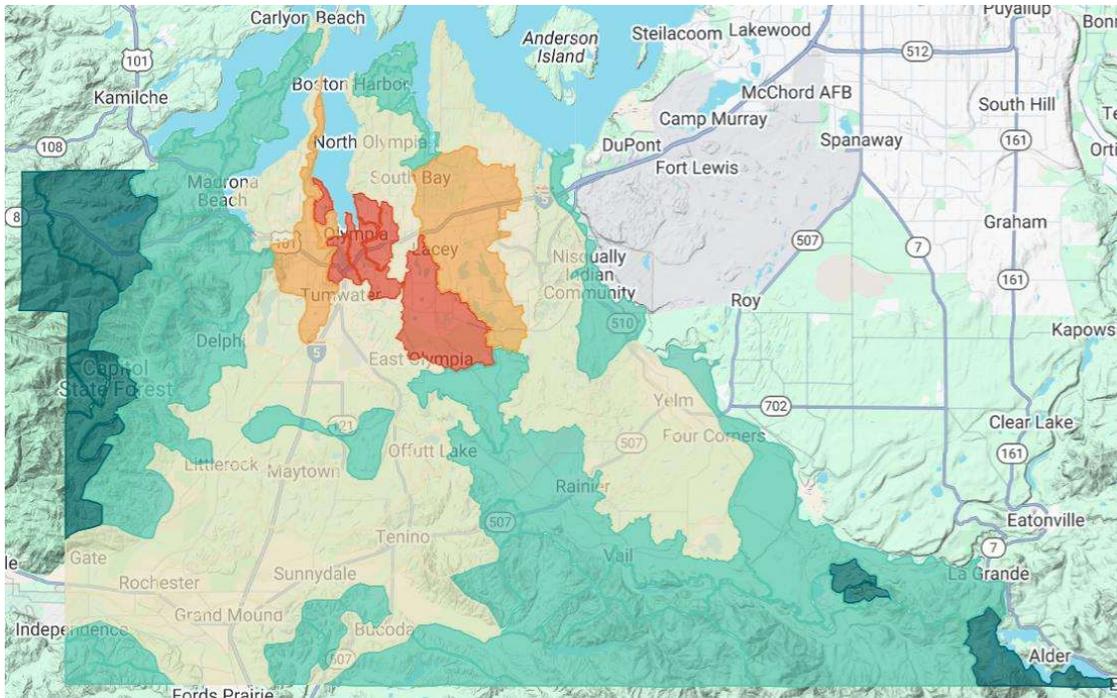
Impervious surface, forest cover, and riparian vegetation are used to assess overall basin health. Between 2001 and 2021, nine (9) of Thurston County's 70 basins saw their condition deteriorate.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 2022 USDA Agricultural Census: [https://data.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online\\_Resources/County\\_Profiles/Washington/cp53067.pdf](https://data.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Washington/cp53067.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Washington Forest Protection Agency: <https://www.wfpa.org/climate-change-solutions/forest-statistics/#/thurston>

<sup>5</sup> Thurston Regional Planning Council: <https://www.trpc.org/686/Protecting-Water-Quality>



**Intact:** Intact basins have little to no impervious surfaces, a nearly complete forest canopy, and vegetated riparian corridors. Water bodies are in excellent condition.

**Sensitive:** Sensitive basins have minimal impervious area, considerable forest cover, and riparian corridors with few breaks in protective buffer. Water bodies are in good condition.

**Impacted:** Impacted basins are moderately urbanized, with some remaining forest cover. Riparian corridors are cleared in many places and water quality is fair.

**Degraded:** Degraded basins are urbanized with limited remaining forest canopy or vegetated riparian areas. Water quality is poor, with multiple impairments.

**Very Degraded:** Highly degraded stream basins generally have poor water quality and support a low diversity of aquatic species.

Four (4) intact basins were reclassified as sensitive: Bloody Run, Upper Deschutes River Mainstem, Salmon Creek (Skookumchuck Watershed), Waddell Creek

Three (3) sensitive basins were reclassified as impacted: (Eld Inlet (East), Nisqually Reach, and Offut Lake)

One (1) "impacted" basin was reclassified as degraded: Woodland Creek

One (1) degraded basin was reclassified as very degraded: Chambers Creek

## Appendix 3: Best Available Science and Community Driven Plans

Thurston Conservation District uses best available science, localized research, and vetted conservation standards through the Natural Resources Conservation Service to put conservation on the ground in our community.

In addition, our district plays a critical role in connecting community members to partners, accomplishing conservation work recognized in local and regional plans and partnering on many community-driven initiatives to meet the natural resources priorities of Thurston County and surrounding areas.

Below is a list of scientific studies, local initiatives and plans, and collective impact measurements incorporated in the work we do:

### Local and Regional Plans

*The following are examples of local and regional plans that the work of Thurston Conservation District helps to support:*

The Sustainable Thurston Plan [Creating Places — Preserving Spaces: A Sustainable Development Plan for the Thurston Region](#) creates a vision for sustainable development, including land use, housing, energy, transportation, food, and health, including goals such as ‘no net loss’ of agricultural lands.

Local strategy to mitigate the impacts of climate change on our area is captured within the [Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan](#) and [Thurston Climate Action Plan](#) specifically efforts around carbon sequestration opportunities for farms, forests and prairies. Climate change also increases risk of natural disasters and the [Hazards Mitigation Plan](#) details actions to build resilient communities.

[Thurston 2045](#) is a 20-year growth plan for future land use and natural resources protections, in addition to housing, economic development and population growth.

The [2025 State of the Sound](#) report identifies health indicators and responses needed for the recovery of Puget Sound, including restoring salmon runs, opening shellfish beds and upholding tribal treaty rights. The [2026-2030 Action Agenda Update](#) is a regional plan to advance Puget Sound recovery efforts.

### Additional Data Sources

*The following are examples of the sources of data considered by TCD in both identifying natural resource concerns and addressing them.*

Portions of every watershed in Thurston County have water quality impairments, which include, but are not limited to, temperature, dissolved oxygen, bacteria (such as fecal coliform), pH, and fine sediment. These water impairments have resulted in segments being included in the [Department of Ecology’s 303\(d\) listings](#).

Portions of every watershed in Thurston County have invasive plant, animal, and aquatic species, lack adequate instream large woody debris and riparian cover, and exhibit reduced summer low-flows which are noted on the [303\(d\) listings](#) and the [Limiting Factors Analyses for WRIAs 11,13,14, and 22](#).

[Reduced salmon populations, including ESA-listed fish and state species of concern](#) have been affected by several factors in the South Sound, which includes Thurston County fresh and estuarine systems. Factors include degraded habitat, land use, overfishing, among others. [Watershed Recovery Plans](#) have been developed to address these issues.

Farmland loss and conversion to developed land uses is a major threat to agricultural viability and habitat availability. [American Farmland Trust: Farms Under Threat 2040](#) analyzes the projected future farmland loss under various development scenarios.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts significant impacts from [sea level rise](#) to Puget Sound shoreline communities in Thurston County.

The [South Thurston Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) aligns community priorities, fire science and strategies to reduce risk of devastating wildfire.

## Appendix 4: Organizational Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis

### ***Strengths***

#### **District:**

Plays a unique role in the conservation landscape and our local community.

Has trust of community members.

Ability to be flexible and nimble to respond and adapt to changing needs.

High degree of integrity, accountability and transparent governance.

Responsible use of public funding.

Highly qualified and tenured expertise that provides consistency, continuity and integrity.

Welcoming, passionate and positive staff culture.

Strong and welcoming Board culture and organizational governance.

Holistic care for employees and their health.

Collaborative organizational culture.

Adherence to organizational mission, voluntary stewardship ethic and on-the-ground conservation impact.

Responsive to community needs that drive the organization.

#### **Community:**

Active, passionate community that values conservation.

Public is interested in and engaged in many stewardship activities.

### ***Weaknesses***

#### **District:**

Funding volatility and availability.

Increasing costs including rent.

Insufficient office and restoration equipment and maintenance space.

#### **Community:**

Many community members still don't know what the Conservation District is and does.

Reliant on grant funding that may not align with highest priority community needs.

Organization is primarily soft funded which takes a lot of time and capacity to maintain and increases funding instability.

### ***Opportunities***

#### **District:**

Demonstrate leadership in conservation in our community and beyond.

Increase cross-departmental work and collaboration internally.

#### **Community:**

Create a space for the community to convene, learn and see on-the-ground conservation in action.

Innovative marketing and outreach to continue to demonstrate what the CD is doing and build a brand.

### ***Threats***

#### **District:**

Federal and state budgets fluctuate significantly and provide little stability in funding and limit reliable growth.

#### **Community:**

Land use change is a huge threat, urban sprawl and conversion of farm and forest lands is a major natural resource concern in our area.

Ill-fitting regulations create conflict between natural resource types.

Impacts of a changing climate on our natural landscape and public health increase vulnerability to our natural resources and population.

## Appendix 5: Community Survey Data Analysis

*Thurston Conservation District conducted a community survey to help identify natural resources challenges and support needed by our community to address them. Below is the analysis of emergent themes and priority trends:*

### **Themes identifying the biggest conservation needs in Thurston County:**

- Forests/Trees: repeated concerns about protecting and restoring forests, urban canopy, and limiting clearing.
- Water: water quality, watershed health, water pollution, and management came up frequently.
- Preservation/Protection: emphasis on protecting farmland, wetlands, open space, and rural character.
- Access and Equity: access to land, food, gardens, and engagement opportunities for all residents.
- Biodiversity and Wildlife: salmon recovery, pollinators, and habitat preservation.
- Pollution and Overdevelopment: worries about urban sprawl, pollution, and loss of farmland/natural space.
- Fire and Climate Resilience: wildfire risk reduction and climate adaptation strategies.

Priority trend: Forests + Water + Farmland protection are the top three recurring needs, with strong attention to equity/access and resilience to development pressures.

### **Needed programs, services, or supports to address natural resources concerns:**

- Community Engagement & Education: More communication on what people can do personally. Better outreach/advertising of existing conservation work. Hands-on events, workshops, and school programs.
- Access and Equity Initiatives: Support for low-income residents to access land, food, and conservation opportunities. Land access for growing/foraging food.
- Policy and Land Use Tools: Stricter zoning/enforcement against overdevelopment. Incentives for rural and agricultural landowners (tax breaks, technical assistance). Coordinated regional governance for land/water protection.
- Funding and Capacity: More resources for restoration, South Sound Green, and riparian work. Ongoing funding for wildfire preparedness, green infrastructure, and pollinator programs.
- Collaboration and Partnerships: Stronger communication and coordination across jurisdictions and organizations.

Priority trend: Residents want education, equity in access, and stronger land use protections, paired with capacity and funding for existing programs.

**Vision for Thurston County by 2045:**

- Healthy, Connected Ecosystems: strong salmon recovery, restored riparian zones, protected forests, resilient farms, reduced pollution and invasive species.
- Protected Land and Rural Character: Farmland, wetlands, and forests preserved. Rural way of life is balanced with conservation.
- Climate Resilience and Fire Safety: Green infrastructure, pollution prevention, and Firewise practices mainstreamed.
- Community Access and Connection: Widespread engagement, gardens as common gathering places, food and land access normalized. Residents feel part of the natural system and are responsible for its care.
- Governance and Leadership: Strong regional authority to regulate land use. A government that is open to learning and prioritizing conservation.

Priority trend: A vision of resilient, biodiverse landscapes (forests, farmland, water, wildlife) supported by equitable community access and forward-looking governance.

**Overall Priorities:**

1. *Protect forests, farmland, and waterways* (core conservation).
2. *Build climate resilience* (fire prevention, pollution control, green infrastructure).
3. *Expand community engagement and equity* (access to land, food, education, participation).
4. *Strengthen governance and policy tools* (zoning, incentives, regional authority).
5. *Increase capacity and funding* for restoration, partnerships, and program continuity.

**Summary:**

Thurston County residents envision a future where forests, farms, and waters are protected, climate resilience is built into daily life, everyone has access to land and food, and conservation is a shared community value led by strong local leadership.

## Appendix 6: Strategic Plan Development Timeline

Thurston Conservation District conducted a robust planning process inclusive of facilitated planning sessions, surveys, and public events. Feedback was solicited internally from board and staff members, and externally from community members, agricultural producers, conservation partners, tribes, local jurisdictions and those within Thurston County interested in the work of the conservation district.

Below is the development and adoption timeline for this strategic planning process:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Who</b>
July Board Meeting	Strategic Planning Orientation	Orient Board to Strategic Planning process, objectives and materials at the July Board Meeting	Board & ED
End July – Early August	Community Data Collection	High-level community priorities survey	Community
Early August	Board Strategic Vision Session	Dream, brainstorm and reimagine TCD’s mission and vision	Board & ED
August	Staff Strategic Planning Discussion	Review Board brainstorm, Discuss	ED & Staff
Late August	Set Priorities	Discuss Community Priorities	Board & ED & Directors
August Board Meeting	Review Community /Staff Feedback	Review Community Feedback @ August Board Meeting	Board
Mid August – Mid October	Draft Plan	Draft plan language and metrics	Staff
September Board Meeting	Review Draft Progress	Review drafted plan sections completed and provide further guidance/revision @ September Board Meeting	Board
Early October	Community Data Collection	Community data collection @ Harvest Festival and electronically following	Community
October Board Meeting	Review Draft Plan Update	Review Draft Plan Update and Community Feedback	Board
November Board Meeting	Adopt Strategic Plan		Board

## Appendix 7: Communications and Engagement Plan

Effective communication and engagement are essential to building trust, transparency, and community ownership of our work. Regular evaluation ensures that the Thurston Conservation District (TCD) remains adaptive, data-informed, and focused on achieving meaningful conservation outcomes.

TCD is committed to open, accessible, and proactive communication with partners, stakeholders, and the public.

### **Key Objectives:**

- Share progress and success stories that demonstrate the impact of conservation in our community.
- Ensure staff, board members, and partners have consistent access to up-to-date information.
- Foster public awareness of conservation opportunities, resources, and programs.

### **Engagement Plan**

TCD believes that conservation success depends on active participation and mutual learning within our community.

#### *Engagement Principles:*

- **Inclusivity:** Ensure voices from diverse communities and landowners are represented.
- **Transparency:** Provide open access to plans, data, and decisions.
- **Collaboration:** Engage stakeholders in program design and evaluation.
- **Responsiveness:** Adapt strategies based on feedback and emerging needs.

#### *Engagement Activities:*

- Host biannual community events to raise awareness of the CD and gather input on strategic initiatives.
- Build a collective impact database to aggregate conservation efforts of TCD and partners to share back to our community.
- Conduct stakeholder surveys to assess satisfaction, trust, and emerging priorities.
- Use youth and adult education programs to foster future conservation leaders.
- Publish annual reports and reports demonstrating our conservation impact.