



# Thurston Conservation District

## 2026 Annual Plan

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### Purpose

The Annual Plan translates the Thurston Conservation District’s 2026–2030 & Beyond Strategic Plan into clear, actionable priorities for the year. It aligns staff work, Board oversight, funding decisions, and community engagement around shared goals—ensuring that daily work advances long-term conservation outcomes for Thurston County.

This plan reflects Phase I of the Strategic Plan (Launch & Foundation), with emphasis on building strong systems, establishing baselines, delivering early impact, and telling a clear story of stewardship.

To achieve our vision where Thurston County thrives as a connected landscape where healthy forests, farms, waters, and communities sustain one another for generations to come., we will build strong foundations, programs, partnerships and capacity.

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### How to Read This Plan

Each Strategic Priority includes:

**Strategic Intent** – why this priority matters

**Annual Focus** – what 2026 emphasizes

**Key Methods** – how the District delivers impact

**Annual Actions & Deliverables** – what will be accomplished

**Measures of Success** – how progress will be tracked

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## Strategic Priority 1: Protect & Restore Natural Resources

### Strategic Intent

Thurston County’s farms, forests, wetlands, and waterways are the foundation of environmental health and community well-being. Growth pressures, land conversion, and climate impacts threaten these systems. This priority advances stewardship at the landscape scale—protecting working lands, restoring ecosystems, and improving watershed health so that clean water, productive soils, and thriving habitats endure for generations.

### Annual Focus (2026)

Establish clear baselines for restoration, stewardship, and land protection.

Advance priority habitat and working lands projects.  
Strengthen partnerships influencing land-use outcomes.

## Key Methods

- Technical assistance and landowner support
- Habitat restoration and working lands implementation
- Land trust partnerships and easement education
- Successional planning and land matching
- Policy engagement and partnership coordination

## Annual Actions & Deliverables

1. **Advance habitat restoration and working lands projects** across forests, farms, rivers, and wetlands through conservation project implementation.
2. **Build an in-house farmland preservation program** to be a leading convener of local working lands preservation efforts and increase land matching and successional planning for farmers and ranchers (South Sound FarmLink and Farm My Yard).
3. **Expand farmland protection** by increasing land trust capacity and conservation easement funding by developing a comprehensive and collaborative local land protection strategy.
4. **Engage landowners in conservation of endangered species habitat** (riparian, prairie, wetland, etc.), especially within the Sentinel Landscape boundary.
5. **Increase soil testing and equipment rental program access** to support conservation practice implementation (fencing, manure spreader, etc.).
6. **Naturalize marine shorelines** through bulkhead removals and soft shore alternatives (Shore Friendly Thurston).
7. **Demonstrate collective impact of voluntary stewardship** through the development of a comprehensive data tracking system to measure conservation activities.

## Measures of Success

- Acres of land actively restored or under stewardship
  - Acres of restoration completed
  - Number of landowners and stewards assisted
  - Dollars invested in local conservation and stewardship
  - Before/after photos, project profiles, map visuals, and landowner stories
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# Strategic Priority 2: Build Climate Resilience & Disaster Preparedness

## Strategic Intent

Thurston County is already experiencing the effects of climate change—drier summers, heavier storms, wildfire risk, and uncertain water supplies. This priority equips communities to prepare for, respond to, and adapt to these impacts through climate-smart practices, green infrastructure, wildfire mitigation and recovery. We recognize that all of our conservation activities address climate change, and we are committed to bringing innovation and climate science to the forefront of our efforts.

## Annual Focus (2026)

Integrate climate resilience into existing conservation programs.

Expand disaster preparedness, wildfire education, and green infrastructure efforts.

Establish climate-related performance tracking.

## Key Methods

- Climate-smart farming and regenerative conservation practices
- Irrigation efficiencies planning and infrastructure rehabilitation
- Green infrastructure and stormwater partnerships
- Community resource sharing and post-event response analysis

## Annual Actions & Deliverables

1. **Engage K12 students in planning for the future** of resource stewardship (South Sound GREEN Congress, Teens in Thurston, Summer Teacher Institute).
2. Develop disaster preparedness and resilience **assistance tools for wildfire, flood and drought** (Wildfire Ready Neighbors, Firewise, etc.).
3. Build on community partner network to **enhance and share disaster and climate response resources** with local jurisdictions and emergency management agencies.
4. Conduct post-disaster surveys and response analysis (e.g., flooding, fire) to **understand direct impacts to land stewards and landscapes**.
5. **Advance urban and rural green infrastructure** and stormwater pilot projects.
6. Increase wild and working forest health assessments to **promote drought and fire resilience and increase carbon storage**.
7. **Connect community to science** and our landscape through volunteer events, storytelling, and education.

## Measures of Success

- Number of next generation stewards empowered

- Percent of water savings from irrigation efficiencies
  - Climate resilience projects initiated or completed
  - Community resilience stories and testimonials
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## Strategic Priority 3: Create Community, Access & Equity

### Strategic Intent

Healthy ecosystems and opportunities to connect with land should be accessible to everyone. This priority removes barriers to participation in conservation, supports community-led stewardship, and ensures that gardens, farms, and natural spaces are everyday resources for all. As a lead convener in our community, we tend and transfer knowledge that helps create connection to our land and its people develop their sense of place and belonging.

### Annual Focus (2026)

Expand equitable access to land, food, and conservation programs.

Strengthen community-led and culturally relevant engagement.

Engage the next generation in voluntary stewardship.

### Key Methods

- Community partnerships, internships and ambassador programs
- Education and outreach rooted in lived experience
- Access-focused programs and shared resources
- Inclusive, multilingual, and accessible communications

### Annual Actions & Deliverables

1. **Develop a community of stewards** through the ‘United in Conservation’ campaign that actively promotes our organizational mission.
2. Host key stewardship and outreach events to **engage the community** in our programs and **demonstrate our impact** (Native Plant Festival, Harvest Festival, Grower’s Conference, etc.).
3. **Inspire new populations to engage in conservation**, by developing community gardens with garden ambassadors, Veteran’s internship programs, and career development pathways through our habitat restoration crew, etc.
4. **Improve ADA accessibility** of digital materials and our website, as well as improve visual signage for our building and outreach displays.
5. Host community events with inclusive design (food, kid’s activities, bus line, etc.) to **bring conservation education to all**.
6. **Strengthen partnerships** with community-led organizations, coalitions, and non-profit organizations to lift up collaborators who share our mission.

7. Generate storytelling content with our community members to **share the power of Voluntary Stewardship** in Thurston County through videos, social media campaigns and innovative marketing strategies.

### Measures of Success

- Number of community members engaged
  - Engagement with underserved communities
  - Collective impact data across Thurston County
  - Testimonials, surveys, and visual storytelling
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## Strategic Priority 4: Invest in Organizational Excellence & Leadership

### Strategic Intent

Strong conservation outcomes depend on a strong organization. This priority ensures that the District operates as a trusted regional leader with skilled staff, effective systems, and sufficient and sustainable funding.

### Annual Focus (2026)

Strengthen internal systems, governance, and leadership capacity.

Secure and diversify funding.

Lay groundwork for long-term infrastructure investments.

### Key Methods

- Leadership development and policy collaboration
- Staff and Board capacity building
- Financial sustainability and diversification
- Process improvement and accountability systems

### Annual Actions & Deliverables

1. **Diversify revenue** and develop a system of rates and charges that aligns with our community's conservation needs and supports consistency of programs and services.
2. **Advance Conservation & Education Center** planning and fundraising to secure land, begin campus design and solidify partnership network.
3. **Maintain clean audits and timely public disclosure** responses as a component of our commitment to efficient and transparent governance.

4. Develop and implement organizational communications strategy to **increase recognition, awareness and support of Thurston Conservation District** activities, initiatives and funding.
5. Educate and strengthen relationships with legislators and local decision makers to **expand conservation and natural resources funding and policies**.
6. Complete an **overhaul of Policies & Procedures manual** to ensure alignment with most recent Collective Bargaining Agreement and updates to legislation.
7. Deliver excellent professional development opportunities for all staff and Board members to **maintain high-level professional expertise**.

### Measures of Success

- Financial health indicators and clean audits
  - Revenue longevity, diversification and funding leveraged
  - Staff and Board participation in professional development
  - Organizational policy and leadership stories
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## Strategic Plan Phase 1: Launch and Foundation

During this phase, the focus of this year is to establish systems, baselines, and partnerships, including the following:

- 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.
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## Storytelling, Evaluation & Reporting

Each year, TCD pairs quantitative metrics with qualitative stories to demonstrate real-world impact. Data is supported by:

- Project profiles and maps
- Before/after photos
- Landowner and partner testimonials

- Multi-media platforms (social media, video, articles, podcasts, newsletters, print materials, advertising, etc.)
- Community stories highlighting stewardship and the collective impact of our programs and services

Progress is reviewed through an annual adaptive management cycle: Plan → Implement → Evaluate → Learn → Adapt.

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