



**Date:** November 20, 2015  
**To:** Puget Sound Local Working Group  
**From:** Amy Hendershot, Puget Sound Team District Conservationist  
**Subject:** FY2017, FY2018, and FY2019 Puget Sound Team Local Working Group Programs, Fund Pools, Eligible Practices, Hold Downs, and Rules

The Puget Sound Team Local Working Group met on November 20, 2015 in Olympia, WA. The meeting was chaired by Jim Goché, Market Gardens NW LLC, and facilitated by Shana Joy, Washington State Conservation Commission Puget Sound Regional Manager. The Local Working Group prioritized resource concerns for EQIP, Locally Led—Local Working Group as well as establishing hold downs, recommending conservation practices, and providing comments for applications which should receive the highest consideration for funding.

### **Farm Bill Conservation Programs Selected as Applicable/Useful to the Puget Sound Team**

Those italicized are discussed further in this document (practices to treat the priorities, resource concerns, recommended hold downs, recommended rules, etc.)

- *Agricultural Conservation Easement Program*
- *Environmental Quality Incentives Program*
  - *Locally Led—Local Working Group*
  - *Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative*
  - *Energy Initiative*
  - *National Water Quality Initiative*
  - *Organic Initiative*
  - *Sentinel Lands Initiative*
  - *Shellfish Initiative*
  - *Pacific Salmon Habitat Improvement Partnership*
- *Regional Conservation Partnership Program*
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (USDA Farm Service Agency program—not included in budget request but noted as an important program)

### **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program**

The Puget Sound Team Local Working Group communicated very strongly the need for additional resources to address farmland preservation and land use conversion. The Local Working Group communicated that this should be a major focus for NRCS locally.

### **Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Locally Led—Local Working Group Fund Pools and Initial Allocation Percentages**

The Puget Sound Team locally led EQIP allocation will be divided into four categories. Applicants may submit one application to each of the four categories, or fund pools, in addition to the many other EQIP Initiatives and programs available in the Puget Sound region. These priority resource concern fund pools, listed below, are applicable on the land use designated.



Each percentage which indicates the initial percentage of the total initial locally led allocation to the Puget Sound Team.

1. Water Quality Degradation –Excess nutrients in surface and ground waters (35%) (Other/Farmstead, Crop, Pasture)
2. Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife—Habitat Degradation (33%) (Pasture, Crop, Forest, Other/Farmstead)
3. Degraded Plant Condition—Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health (25%) (Forest, Pasture, Other/Farmstead, Crop)
4. Excess/Insufficient Water—Inefficient Use of Irrigation Water (7%) (Crop, Pasture)

### **Payment Caps (Hold Downs)**

An Animal Unit (AU) cap of \$3,500/AU will be in effect for livestock-related practices (i.e. waste storage facilities, roofs and covers, composting facilities). These hold downs will not pertain to crop farmers wanting to install these practices. Practices pertaining to forest practices (e.g. forest stand improvement, tree/shrub planting, etc.) will maintain a \$50,000 per conservation practice cap.

### **Funding “Rules”**

Fund the top water quality project (up to 50% of entire EQIP allocation can be used on it) then apply the funding pool percentages to remaining allocation. Funds will be divided according to the above percentages. Applications will be funded in order of ranking until either there is no more money remaining in that fund pool or until the application dollar request amount exceeds the dollar amount remaining in that fund pool. Applications may not be “skipped” within their own fund pool. Funds not pre-approved during Round 1 allocation will be redistributed equally to the top two resource concerns (Water Quality, Fish & Wildlife Habitat).

### **Ranking Questions, Eligible Practices, and Hold Downs by Fund Pool**

1. Water Quality Degradation –Excess nutrients in surface and ground waters (35% of initial allocation) (Other/Farmstead, Crop, Pasture)

An objective within this fund pool is to address and treat all aspects of a manure management system from collection, storage, and utilization--especially on farms where there is active sediment and nutrient delivery to streams present.

#### **Local Ranking Questions**

1. Will practices be installed that are identified in an approved CAP? 75 points.
2. Will practices be installed that help address water quality in an adjacent impaired waterway? 75 points.
3. Will practices be installed to protect livestock during flood events or stabilize heavy traffic areas to protect water quality? 50 points.
4. Will the proposed practices reduce the potential for manure or other nutrient discharge into waterways? 200 points.
5. Will practices be installed that improve habitat for wildlife? 50 points.
6. Is the land zoned in long-term agriculture? 50 points.



WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION—Excess nutrients in surface and ground waters Eligible Practices	Hold Down
Access Control (472)	\$0
Agrichemical Handling Facility (309)	\$0
Composting Facility (317)	\$3,500/AU
Conservation Cover (327)	\$0
Cover Crop (340)	\$0
Critical Area Planting (342)	\$0
Fence (382)	\$0
Field Border (386)	\$0
Filter Strip (393)	\$0
Heavy Use Area Protection (561)	\$0
Irrigation Pipeline (430)	\$0
Mulching (484)	\$0
Irrigation System (442)	\$0
Nutrient Management (590)	\$0
Pipeline (516)	\$0
Prescribed Grazing (528)	\$0
Pumping Plant (533)	\$0
Riparian Forest Buffer (391)	\$0
Roof Runoff Structure (558)	\$0
Roofs and Covers (367)	\$3,500/AU
Solid/Liquid Waste Separation Facility (632)	\$0
Stream Crossing (578)	\$0
Streambank and Shoreline Protection (580)	\$0
Waste Facility Closure (360)	\$0
Waste Recycling (633)	\$0
Waste Storage Facility (313)	\$3,500/AU
Waste Transfer (634)	\$0
Water Well (642)	\$0
Watering Facility (614)	\$0
Water Harvesting Catchment (636)	\$0



2. Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife—Habitat Degradation (33%) (Pasture, Crop, Forest, Other/Farmstead)

The objectives in this fund pool include contributing to recovery and benefit of threatened and endangered species in critical or priority habitat, removing fish passage barriers, and improving habitat for shellfish. The local working group asked NRCS to consider adjacency to already-conserved habitat, multiple species benefits, and consider projects that included fence to normally exclude livestock from riparian areas.

Local Ranking Questions

1. Answer one of the following:
  - a. Will the proposed practice(s) directly improve habitat for a T&E species that is known to occur within the project boundary? 400 points.
  - b. Will the proposed practice(s) directly improve priority or critical habitat for a T&E species not known to occur within the project boundary? 275 points.
2. Do the proposed practice(s) include fencing to normally exclude livestock from riparian areas? 50 points.
3. Does the project adjoin habitat that has already been restored or further habitat connectivity? 50 points.
4. Will the proposed project improve habitat for more than one species? 50 points

INADEQUATE HABITAT FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE— Habitat Degradation Eligible Practices	Hold Down
Access Control (472)	\$0
Aquatic Organism Passage (396)	\$0
Brush Management (314)	\$0
Channel Bed Stabilization (584)	\$0
Conservation Cover (327)	\$0
Cover Crop (340)	\$0
Critical Area Planting (342)	\$0
Early Successional Habitat Development and Management (647)	\$0
Fence (382)	\$0
Field Border (386)	\$0
Filter Strip (393)	\$0
Grade Stabilization Structure (410)	\$0
Grassed Waterway (412)	\$0
Hedgerow Planting (422)	\$0
Herbaceous Weed Control (315)	\$0
Mulching (484)	\$0
Nutrient Management (590)	\$0
Obstruction Removal (500)	\$0
Open Channel (582)	\$0



Pipeline (516)	\$0
Prescribed Grazing (528)	\$0
Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats (643)	\$0
Riparian Forest Buffer (391)	\$0
Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390)	\$0
Shallow Water Development and Management (646)	\$0
Silvopasture (381)	\$0
Stream Crossing (578)	\$0
Stream Habitat Improvement (395)	\$0
Streambank and Shoreline Protection (580)	\$0
Structure for Water Control (587)	\$0
Tree & Shrub Establishment (612)	\$0
Tree & Shrub Site Preparation (490)	\$0
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)	\$0
Watering Facility (614)	\$0
Wetland Enhancement (659)	\$0
Wetland Restoration (657)	\$0
Wetland Wildlife Management (644)	\$0
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Est. (380)	\$0
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation (650)	\$0

3. Degraded Plant Condition—Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health (25%) (Forest, Pasture, Other/Farmstead, Crop)

Objectives in this fund pool are to treat overstocked forest stands using mostly pre-commercial thinning, improve stand diversity and age, reduce competing vegetation, and manage livestock in such a way as to increase the productivity and health on all land uses where applicable.

Local Ranking Questions

1. Will the applicant install practices identified in an approved CAP 106 and/or conservation plan or other approved management plan? 125 points.
2. Does the applicant have a contractor bid or plan on completing the work by him/herself? 175 points.
3. Does the planned treatment area include trees that are <30% crown ratio or >800 trees per acre or in need of stand release in a stand approximately 5 years in age and will pre-commercial thinning or stand release be used to improve forest health? 175 points.
4. Will practices be installed to facilitate and improve grazing management? 75 points.

DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION—Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health Eligible Practices	Hold Down
Access Control (472)	\$0



Brush Management (314)	\$0
Fence (382)	\$0
Forage and Biomass Planting (512)	\$0
Herbaceous Weed Control (315)	\$0
Nutrient Management (590)	\$0
Pipeline (516)	\$0
Prescribed Grazing (528)	\$0
Water Well (642)	\$0
Watering Facility (614)	\$0
Forest Stand Improvement (666)	\$50,000
Mulching (484)	\$0
Riparian Forest Buffer (391)	\$0
Tree & Shrub Establishment (612)	\$50,000
Tree & Shrub Site Preparation (490)	\$50,000
Woody Residue Treatment (384)	\$50,000
Tree/Shrub Pruning (660)	\$50,000
Silvopasture Establishment (381)	\$0

4. Inefficient Use of Irrigation Water (7% of initial allocation) (Crop, Pasture)

The objective for this fund pool is to improve irrigation efficiencies.

Local Ranking Questions

1. Answer only a, b, or c:
  - a. Will the proposed practices improve irrigation efficiencies by 10 percent? 100 points.
  - b. Will the proposed practices improve irrigation efficiencies by 15 percent? 200 points.
  - c. Will the proposed practices improve irrigation efficiencies by 20 percent? 300 points.

EXCESS/INSUFFICIENT WATER—Inefficient Use of Irrigation Water Eligible Practices	Hold Down
Irrigation Pipeline (430)	\$0
Irrigation System, Microirrigation (441)	\$0
Irrigation System, Sprinkler (442)	\$0
Irrigation Water Management (449)	\$0
Pumping Plant (533)	\$0
Structure for Water Control (587)	\$0
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Est. (380)	\$0
Mulching (484)	\$0



Water Harvesting Catchment (636)	\$0
----------------------------------	-----

**National Initiatives Applicable to the Puget Sound Team**

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative**

The high tunnel program has been one of the most successful initiatives in the Puget Sound. Seasonal high tunnels are structures made of metal pipe and covered with plastic or other sheeting. Easy to build, maintain, and move, they provide an energy-efficient way to extend the growing season, reduce or avoid use of pesticides and reduce run-off and leaching of nitrogen. Unlike greenhouses, they require no energy, relying on natural sunlight to modify the climate inside to create favorable conditions for growing vegetable and other specialty crops. In addition, their establishment in the Puget Sound Team provides for additional income and food security for the region. The Puget Sound Team routinely receives more applications than it can fund. The typical farm size is approximately 5 acres and the Puget Sound Team could probably fund 20 of these a year, given adequate funding. The Puget Sound Team recommends no change in the FY15 ranking questions or hold down of \$6,000 per high tunnel.

Recommended Eligible Practice	Recommended Hold Down	Requested Funds
Seasonal High Tunnel for Crops (798)	\$6,000	\$120,000

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Energy Initiative**

The Energy Initiative is a unique, multi-faceted “whole-farm” approach assisting landowners by identifying energy resource concerns that can translate to energy savings. Through this initiative, the landowner or operator can apply energy savings practices such as irrigation systems and pumping plants that reduces energy inputs and lowers operation costs. This initiative is especially important to the remaining dairies in the Puget Sound Team. Many of them would benefit from energy audits and installing practices to address their energy needs. The Puget Sound Team also receives more applications than it can fund annually for installed practices identified in an energy audit. Practices like lighting, variable frequency drives, compressors, and milk coolers are popular. The typical farm size is approximately 150 acres and the Puget Sound Team could probably fund 8 of these a year, given adequate funding.

Recommended Eligible Practices	Recommended Hold Down	Requested Funds
Pumping Plant (533)	\$100,000	\$200,000
Farmstead Energy Improvement (374)	\$100,000	
Irrigation Pipeline (430)	\$100,000	
Irrigation System, Microirrigation (441)	\$100,000	
Irrigation System, Spinkler (442)	\$100,000	
Irrigation Water Management (449)	\$100,000	
Lighting System Improvement (670)	\$100,000	



Combustion System Improvement (372)	\$100,000	
Building Envelope Improvement (672)	\$100,000	
Agricultural Energy Management Plan (128)	none	

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program, National Water Quality Initiative**

Water quality is the Local Working Group's top priority for FY2017. Water quality issues are also found on livestock farms where animals are adjacent to waterbodies and waterways. The typical farms size for this scenario is 100 acres and the Puget Sound Team could probably fund 5 of these a year, given adequate funding.

Recommended Eligible Practices	Recommended Hold Down	Requested Funds
Access Control (472)	\$0	\$600,000
Agrichemical Handling Facility (309)	\$0	
Composting Facility (317)	\$3,500/AU	
Conservation Cover (327)	\$0	
Cover Crop (340)	\$0	
Critical Area Planting (342)	\$0	
Fence (382)	\$0	
Field Border (386)	\$0	
Filter Strip (393)	\$0	
Heavy Use Area Protection (561)	\$0	
Irrigation Pipeline (430)	\$0	
Mulching (484)	\$0	
Nutrient Management (590)	\$0	
Pipeline (516)	\$0	
Prescribed Grazing (528)	\$0	
Pumping Plant (533)	\$0	
Riparian Forest Buffer (391)	\$0	
Roof Runoff Structure (558)	\$0	
Roofs and Covers (367)	\$3,500/AU	
Solid/Liquid Waste Separation Facility (632)	\$0	
Stream Crossing (578)	\$0	
Streambank and Shoreline Protection (580)	\$0	
Waste Facility Closure (360)	\$0	
Waste Recycling (633)	\$0	
Waste Storage Facility (313)	\$3,500/AU	



Waste Transfer (634)	\$0
Water Well (642)	\$0
Watering Facility (614)	\$0
Water Harvesting Catchment (636)	\$0

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Organic Initiative**

The EQIP Organic Initiative is a nationwide special initiative to provide financial assistance to National organic Program (NOP) certified organic producers as well as producers in the process of transitioning to organic production. Organic producers may also apply for assistance under the Locally Led—Local Working Group EQIP program that is open to both organic and non-organic producers.

Recommended Eligible Practices	Recommended Hold Down	Requested Funds
Composting Facility (317)	\$3,500/AU	\$30,000
Cover Crop (340)	\$0	
Conservation Cover (327)	\$0	
Fence (382)	\$0	
Field Border (386)	\$0	
Forage and Biomass Planting (512)	\$0	
Hedgerow Planting (422)	\$0	
Heavy Use Area Protection (561)	\$0	
Irrigation Pipeline (430)	\$0	
Irrigation System, Microirrigation (441)	\$0	
Irrigation System, Sprinkler (442)	\$0	
Irrigation Water Management (449)	\$0	
Mulching (484)	\$0	
Nutrient Management (590)	\$0	
Pipeline (516)	\$0	
Prescribed Grazing (528)	\$0	
Pumping Plant (533)	\$0	
Riparian Forest Buffer (391)	\$0	
Roof Runoff Structure (558)	\$0	
Roofs and Covers (367)	\$3,500/AU	
Stream Crossing (578)	\$0	
Tree & Shrub Establishment (612)	\$0	
Tree & Shrub Site Preparation (490)	\$0	
Waste Facility Closure (360)	\$0	
Waste Recycling (633)	\$0	
Waste Storage Facility (313)	\$3,500/AU	
Waste Transfer (634)	\$0	
Watering Facility (614)	\$0	



**State Initiatives Applicable to the Puget Sound Team**

**Olympia Oyster Restoration Initiative & PSHIP**

Native oyster restoration may be of interest to a few shellfish producers. As this would be a new program, the Puget Sound Team is not yet aware of how much interest this would garner. PSHIP would be used to protect salmon and improve water quality.

Recommended Eligible Practices	Recommended Hold Down	Requested Funds
Access Control (472)	\$0	\$100,000
Agrichemical Handling Facility (309)	\$0	
Composting Facility (317)	\$3,500/AU	
Conservation Cover (327)	\$0	
Cover Crop (340)	\$0	
Critical Area Planting (342)	\$0	
Fence (382)	\$0	
Field Border (386)	\$0	
Filter Strip (393)	\$0	
Heavy Use Area Protection (561)	\$0	
Irrigation Pipeline (430)	\$0	
Mulching (484)	\$0	
Nutrient Management (590)	\$0	
Pipeline (516)	\$0	
Prescribed Grazing (528)	\$0	
Pumping Plant (533)	\$0	
Restoration and Management of Rare & Declining Habitats	\$0	
Riparian Forest Buffer (391)	\$0	
Roof Runoff Structure (558)	\$0	
Roofs and Covers (367)	\$3,500/AU	
Solid/Liquid Waste Separation Facility (632)	\$0	
Stream Crossing (578)	\$0	
Streambank and Shoreline Protection (580)	\$0	
Waste Facility Closure (360)	\$0	
Waste Recycling (633)	\$0	
Waste Storage Facility (313)	\$3,500/AU	
Waste Transfer (634)	\$0	
Water Well (642)	\$0	



Watering Facility (614)	\$0
Water Harvesting Catchment (636)	\$0

**Sentinel Lands Initiative**

The Sentinel Lands Partnership was initiated by the United States Department of Agriculture, Department of Defense, and Department of Interior in cooperation with local and state partners to reduce impacts to military readiness and training caused by the designation of a wildlife species for Federal protection. This is accomplished by each of the Federal partners playing a role in habitat enhancement and protection both on and off of military installations. The NRCS role would be to provide technical and financial assistance to improve the quality of habitat on working agricultural lands as well as providing easement opportunities to preserve working agricultural lands containing habitat that is critical to the species. The Department of Defense, using existing programs is to enhance habitat on military installations as well as provide funding for off-base acquisitions of Critical Habitat for listed species. The Department of Interior is to provide “regulatory certainty” for farmers and ranchers who install and maintain conservation practices, and/or enroll in a permanent conservation easement that benefits a targeted species. The key to the success of the program is the regulatory certainty. Without this component the program will not be very successful as the incentives to enrollment and providing habitat are low. Average farm size is 20-40 acres. At this time, no recommended practices until Interior proposes their regulatory certainty package.

**RCPP**

RCPP ACEP funds are needed in the Puget Sound Team to protect farmland from development. All attendees at the Local Working Group meeting agreed that farmland (and farmer) preservation are critical for the counties in the Puget Sound Team—without them, NRCS would have nothing left to conserve.

**Potential Local Projects (top priority projects are italicized)**

- Conservation Easements*
- Outreach & Education regarding resources available to producers*
- Multi-species benefits projects*
- ESA species and regulatory certainty
- Flooding & Drought*
- Water Quality—Nutrients in Ground and Surface Waters*
- Forest road maintenance and proper abandonment
- Fire risk reduction