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July 18, 2016

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO June 27, 2016 LETTER

Thank you for your letter dated June 27, 2016 and your input to the Snohomish Conservation District's (SCD) 2017 Work Plan. The District appreciates the opportunity to work with the Stillaguamish River Clean Water District Advisory Board and your guidance on the District's 2017 Work Plan.

Alternatives for Horse Bedding

SCD agrees that despite good efforts, the accumulation of horse-stall waste piles continue to pose a risk to water quality in the CWD.

The SCD looks forward to looking into chopped-straw bedding as an alternative including:

- pros and cons of use,
- how its use differs in practice from wood fiber bedding and,
- its comparative costs (including disposal).

We have already been discussing in-house where there may be opportunities on horse operations that will allow us to do some trials on their farms via our farm and horse-owner outreach programs.

Work Requirements

SCD continues to address resource concerns according to NRCS planning criteria. We appreciate the CWD in the letter noting "a shift in SCD work, away from farm plans and towards technical assistance letters" and this creating a disparity between the specified Work Requirements and actual Work Accomplished.

In the 2016 Appendix A however, it states, "Farm planning and implementation support can range from a formal resource management plan developed under NRCS standards and specification to a less formal letter of recommendation to address resource concerns".

It is our every intent to address all resource concerns on properties we assist. That being said, with so many properties requesting assistance, the length and cost of developing a full NRCS plan, and the timing involved as we apply for cost-share assistance we have found that on many of these small acreage parcels it is more cost-effective to write a technical letter immediately to get the concerns addressed quickly so we can most easily move forward with implementation.

This practice is common amongst many districts in the State, where we find non-commercial operations needing technical assistance right away, instead of being put on a 'list' to float to the top when we can get to them for a full plan.

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All efforts are made to follow the NRCS planning process, and meet the criteria to address soil, water, animals, plants, cultural, air and energy needs. We are happy to discuss this further at any time.

Discretionary Fund Projects

SCD understands and is grateful for the opportunity to provide assistance to landowners with project implementation funding. We understand how important it is to have prompt funding assistance to your ratepayers as it relates to small, clean-water projects. SCD will increase our efforts and vigorously pursue every opportunity to bring you more such projects to benefit water quality in the CWD.

Education and Outreach

Education and Outreach will always play a vital and critical role in achieving improved water quality goals. The District will continue with existing education and outreach programs as well as pursue new and innovative opportunities to bring new people to the District. We look forward to another exciting year of work with our all of our cooperators and partners.

The SCD Board of Supervisors would like to thank the CWD Board for its continued support and thoughtfulness in providing recommendations for the upcoming 2017 work plan. It is vital that we work together and move forward with the best work plan to help us achieve the water quality goals we all strive for.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Respectfully,



Mark Craven
Chair, SCD Board of Supervisors