



Washington State Conservation Commission

Legislative Update

WSCC - Regular Business Meeting
July 18, 2020

Ron Shultz, WSCC Policy Director

Legislative Update

- The state response to the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted our state's health care system, strained the state food system, and had devastating impacts to our state's economy.
- One result of these combined hits has been a dramatic revenue shortfall in the state's operating budget.
- June 17, the state Revenue Forecast Council released a revenue forecast:
 - projected shortfall in GF-S revenues of \$4.5 billion in the current biennium, and
 - \$4.4 billion in the 2021-23 biennium.
- Since half of the current 2019-21 biennium has passed, the \$4.5 billion would have to come out of the last fiscal year of the biennium.

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Speculation as to a special session.

Options:

- Return this summer before the November election.
- Return for a special session after the November election.
- Wait until the January 2021 regular session to make whatever fiscal corrections are needed.

Two key factors in their decision:

- The November election.
- Any further stimulus package from Congress.

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Anticipated legislative priorities:

- Covid-19 response and health care impacts
- Economic impacts due to Covid-19 response
- Food system impacts due to Covid-19
- Police policy reform
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in governmental activities

Natural resource advocates want an aggressive natural resource agenda. Possible NR topics:

- increasing the overall proportion of the natural resource budget,
- improved funding for salmon restoration projects,
- permit streamlining for salmon restoration projects,
- increased funding for watershed plans and other watershed-scale plans that have been developed across the state.

There's also legislative interest in once again pursuing legislation to require an agriculture impact statement when state funds are used for the acquisition of an interest in property.

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Questions:

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