A Summary of Washington and Federal Historic Climate–Related 2021-2022 Legislation that Impacts the Agriculture Sector of the Methow Valley - prepared by the Climate Action Implementation Hub

1. Methow Valley Climate Action Plan (CAP) – Agriculture Sector
2. Farming practices in the Methow Valley function as both a carbon sink (storage facility) through climate-smart farming practices, and a source of greenhouse gas emissions from certain other farming practices.
3. Following is a list of near-term action items in the CAP for the agriculture sector.

• Support increased funding of long-established programs that support farms in implementing conservation practices to increase soil health,

carbon sequestration and thereby build resiliency.

• Advocate for full funding of the Sustainable Farms and Field program.

• Support/secure funding for the Carbon Farming Learning Group, to provide educational sources such as soil testing, planning software, training, and field trips.

• Protect additional agricultural lands and permanently protect soils with conservation easements.

• Preserve Methow Valley lands that act as a carbon sink.

1. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) latest report
2. In February, 2022, the IPCC issued its latest report. It is a warning letter to a world on the brink.
3. A sweeping survey of the most advanced climate science on the planet, it recounts the effects rising temperatures are already having and projects the catastrophes that loom if humans fail to make swift and significant cuts to greenhouse gas emissions.
4. Following are key takeaways from the report.

• A certain amount of suffering is inevitable, though adaptation can help.

• Every incremental increase in temperature will lead to dramatically more disease, death and frequent costly disasters.

• Climate change is battering the places and populations least able to adapt, and that is all but certain to continue.

• Global warming is wreaking havoc on plants and wildlife.

• Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a livable future.

1. Historic Washington state legislation will directly impact the agriculture sector of the Methow Valley.
2. Sustainable Farms and Fields Grant Program

• This program will invest in climate smart agriculture for farmers, ranchers and shellfish growers that increase sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

• Not only does the program give farmers the tools they need to be resilient, but it also helps to carry forward the Climate Commitment Act and net zero targets.

• The program will also provide support for solutions that will help align agriculture with salmon recovery.

• For grant information contact Alison Halpern. Tel: (360) 280-5556

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1. Climate Commitment Act

• In 2021, the Washington State legislature passed the historic Climate Commitment Act (CCA).

• The CCA allows a small number of carbon offsets (8% per regulated entity in the first compliance period: 2023-2026) to help reduce pollution where onsite reductions are not feasible or too expensive. At least half of the offsets must come from activities that provide direct environmental benefits to Washington.

• Offsets must represent reductions that are real, additional, permanent, and verifiable.

• Beginning with the second compliance period (2027-2030), offsets are limited to 6% of a covered party’s compliance obligation and 75% of these must provide direct environmental benefits within Washington.

• In the proposal rule there are four different offset protocols that offset project developers can use. The agricultural related protocol is livestock methane capture. It allows dairy and swine producers to develop carbon offset projects by capturing methane emissions from animal manure through the installation of an anaerobic digester. The Department of Ecology anticipates adopting additional protocols in the future.

• For questions, call Andrew Wineke with the Department of Ecology. Tel: (360) 791-1939. Email: anw@ecy.wa.gov.

1. Recent Historic Federal Legislation that may directly benefit the Methow Valley
2. Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)

• Closing the Digital Divide and Connecting Communities

* **ReConnect Program - $2 billion.** The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides USDA with a $2 billion investment through the ReConnect Program to provide loans and grants toward construction costs, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas. This funding comes on top of the $1.15 billion in broadband loans, grants and loan/grant combinations through ReConnect that USDA announced earlier this year.
* **BIL also includes** help for farmers and ranchers grappling with drought, to improve watersheds and water supply in the West, and bolster efforts to repair waterways and watersheds and rehabilitate aging dams to protect communities from flooding.
* **Watershed Infrastructure:** The BIL providES $918 million to invest in both new flood prevention projects as well as repairs on existing watershed infrastructure. This includes water storage structures, flood management systems, bank stabilization projects, and other efforts.

 • In 2022, USDA Rural Development has announced a number of infrastructure investments to support rural communities, including:

* **Support for Local Businesses.** $1.4 billion through eight Rural Development programs to support local businesses, create good-paying jobs and strengthen the economy in rural America through job training, business expansion and technical assistance. The programs these investments are being made through are part of a suite of business and cooperative services that are projected to help create or save more than 50,000 jobs in rural America through investments made in fiscal year 2021.
* **Food and Processing Infrastructure.** USDA is currently making $150 million available under the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program for grants of up to $25 million each to expand processing capacity through a variety of activities, such as construction, expansion of existing facilities, and equipment.
* **Cooperative Extension and Research.** USDA-funded Cooperative Extension and research plays a key role in rural community economic development. Through Smith-Lever capacity funding, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) provides comprehensive local support for farmers, families and communities through the network of close to 14,000 Cooperative Extension agents and education across the 3,000 U.S. counties and county equivalents.
* **Regional Rural Development Centers.** The USDA-NIFA funded Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs) play a unique role in USDA's service to rural America. They link the research and educational outreach capacity of the nation's public universities with communities, local decision makers, entrepreneurs, families, and farmers and ranchers to help address a wide range of development issues. Each group tailors its programs to address specific needs in its region.
* **Climate Hubs.** The 10 USDA Climate Hubs support rural communities and economies and focus on production agriculture, grazing systems, and forest lands. Climate Hubs build on the research and development expertise within USDA research agencies to provide streamlined and coordinated service delivery from multiple programs to ensure working land managers and other stakeholders have the resources they need to operate in a changing climate.

 2. America Rescue Plan Act of 2021

• The Biden administration announced plans on June 1, 2022 to spend more than $2 billion on a broad strategy for making targeted improvements in nearly every aspect of food production and distribution, with an emphasis on addressing the needs of small and mid-size operations and promoting organic and urban agriculture.

• The strategy includes spending $1.3 billion on food processing and distribution, $300 million for assisting farmers to transition to organic agriculture and $230 million to expand urban agriculture and to increase grocery options in inner cities and rural communities that are considered food deserts.

• The $300 million targeted toward organic transition will fund farmer-to-farmer mentoring while also providing assistance with conservation practices, crop insurance and market development.

• Other initiatives in the plan include spending:

* $200 million to help fruit and vegetable growers comply with food safety regulations.
* $400 million to create regional food business centers with expertise in USDA programs to provide coordination and technical assistance to small and mid-size businesses involved in processing, distribution and aggregation. There will be a special focus on reaching historically underserved groups.
* $155 million to expand USDA’s Healthy Food Financing Initiative, which is aimed at reducing food deserts.
* $90 million to prevent and reduce food loss and waste.
* $60 million farm**-**to-school programs that increase markets for smaller-scale farmers through child nutrition programs.

• For grant information contact John Newton. Tel: (202) 406-3729, or Washington’s Department of Agriculture.`

1. [Federal Farm and Food-Related Programs and Grants](https://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/farm-bill-programs-and-grants/)
	* The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, (an alliance of family farm, food, conservation, rural and urban organizations), has established a comprehensive summary of the Federal Government’s wide and varied range of initiatives to support the agriculture sector. The majority of the programs and grants are administered or funded through the USDA directly or in partnership with other agencies. This resource provides a useful tool for navigating this complex field and thereby help to identify potential funding and support opportunities
	* The guide groups the 64 programs and grants into 10 segments of which the following are of particular relevance to the CAP:
		+ Beginning and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers
		+ Conservation and Environment
		+ Food Safety
		+ Healthy Food Access
		+ Organic production
		+ Renewable Energy
		+ Sustainable and Organic Research
2. [Farmers Market Promotion Program](https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/FMPP_FactSheet.pdf)
	* Agricultural Marketing Service provides funds that will develop, coordinate and expand direct producer-to-consumer markets to help increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products by developing, coordinating, expanding and providing outreach, training, and technical assistance to domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, online sales or other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. Eligible entities include Agricultural businesses and cooperatives, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) networks and associations, Food Councils, Economic development corporations, Local governments, Nonprofit and public benefit corporations, Producer networks or associations, regional farmers’ market authorities and Tribal governments. [Farmers Market Promotion Program | Agricultural Marketing Service (usda.gov)](https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp) provides application information.
3. In addition to these highlighted programs there are additional climate related legislative or grant initiatives which could potentially benefit the Methow Valley agriculture sector, and the full set is available on the Resilient Methow Grants and Resources site: [**Agriculture Sector Legislation and Grants**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/18DJVtonoG3VB2ctoxUyh_xf-ZtWSig0I/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=108065429072578987395&rtpof=true&sd=true)