

## WATER AVAILABILITY POLICY STATEMENT

as of January 11, 2018

### Core Principle

Support more flexible policies that would ease restrictions on irrigation water supply from the Columbia River mainstem and allow for redistribution of existing water rights. Support state funding for water conservation partnership programs and for irrigation infrastructure.

### Issue

The wine industry generates over \$4.8 billion in business revenues, \$61.9 million in state taxes, and 25,900 jobs. Consistent and additional water supply is necessary for the production of high value winegrapes and vineyard expansion that can grow the industry's economic impact. However, heavy regulation restricts access to a plentiful Columbia River mainstem water supply and the construction and upkeep of irrigation water infrastructure has not kept pace with the state's rapid development of vineyards.

### Rationale

Winegrapes are a highly water efficient crop, however irrigation water availability is a limiting factor in the expansion of this agricultural sector. East of the Cascades, the state has very little rainfall (the average annual rainfall in Prosser is 6-8 inches). Although some vineyards, primarily in the eastern foothills, can be farmed as dryland operations, most vineyards require a stable irrigation water supply. Supplemental irrigation is also needed in some parts of western Washington during the hot summer months.

Surface water and groundwater laws and water rights are administered by the Washington Department of Ecology under a "prior appropriation" doctrine. Under current regulations, new water rights are difficult to obtain unless they are purchased and transferred from another property.

The primary water source for eastern Washington is the Columbia River Basin, which includes the Snake and Yakima Rivers. Only 4% of the renewable water supply in the basin is used consumptively, less than 3% of the Columbia River is used for irrigation.

Federal funding for new water infrastructure projects has been very limited during the past decade, and will likely remain limited during the foreseeable future.