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Washington Association of Conservation Districts

WACD Week 1 Legislative Update

January 14, 2025

Welcome to the new year. This is WACD's first legislative update for 2025. We hope these emails will be of use and benefit to our members as we collectively navigate the new legislative session.

We will be using this newsletter to expand on legislative priorities, break down budget language, track various proposals that relate to the world of voluntary conservation, and point out opportunities for districts to participate in the process. These weekly mailings will go into greater detail every Monday than will be provided to the membership in WACD's **Five Things** newsletter and is oriented for those who want to more closely observe the goings-on in Olympia.

If there are additional ways WACD can be of service to our membership during session, all you have to do is pick up the phone or write to [Tom](#), [Heather](#), or [Ryan](#)

1. WACD Bill Tracker for 2025

This year, WACD is trying a new app for tracking bills in the 2025 legislative session. You'll be able to sort information more easily, and we'll be keeping track of committee hearings and dates for you to know what's happening each week. Try it out for yourself (<https://airtable.com>)

2. Legislative Day Information

If you haven't seen the Five Things newsletter the last few weeks, WACD secured the Holiday Inn Express & Suites in Lacey/Olympia with a group discount for folks planning to attend WACD Legislative Days on Wednesday, February 5th. To reserve your room,

please follow this link ([HERE](#)). The link will take you to the hotel website, where, at the top of the page, click "book now" and enter the dates (February 4-5), click "search" and the next page will display the room rates and types.

WACD will be hosting a legislative breakfast and briefing on the morning of the 5th, from 7 - 8:00 AM at the Holiday Inn. WACD staff is also preparing legislative materials for districts for their potential use on Leg Day.

If you want assistance from WACD in securing legislative appointments, please reach out to Ryan Baye at ryan@wacd.org.

3. Opportunities to Comment

One regular feature in our weekly legislative newsletter will be opportunities for our membership to engage through the public hearing on various legislative proposals. Online committee testimony is available for both the House and the Senate. You do not need to come to Olympia to speak at a public hearing for a bill. You can register to testify remotely on a bill by using [this link](#) and following the online instructions. Registration closes one hour before the scheduled start of the meeting for which you're seeking to speak. You also have the option to submit written testimony.

Here are a couple bills from our bill tracker scheduled for public hearings this week:

- [SB 5212](#) (Concerning filing of adjudication claims for precode uses of groundwater and surface water in the water resource inventory area 1 water rights adjudication.) - Scheduled for a public hearing in the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee on Thursday, January 16 at 1:30 PM.
- [SB 5117](#) (Promoting agriculture) - Scheduled for a public hearing in the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee on Thursday, January 16 at 1:30 PM.

4. Advocacy Materials

If you missed the WACD Annual Conference in Airway Heights, you didn't see the rollout of our advocacy campaign convincing legislators, both new and returning, of the importance of conservation technical assistance. If you want, you can view the recording here - <https://vimeo.com/showcase/11496159/video/1040514603>.

If you just want to look at our campaign material, click the link (<https://wadistricts.us/campaign2025/>). Please utilize any of the handouts and talking

points that you feel are relevant and useful to your district.

5. General Legislative Update

One of the services provided by our lobbyist Brynn Brady is a weekly summation of general happenings in Olympia each week, information you would learn if you spend every day in the capitol building or clued to TVW.

You can view her [first update](#), focusing on gubernatorial appointments and setting the table for this first week of session, on the WACD Hub.

Looking Into the Crystal Ball

By Ryan Baye

Last Thursday, Governor-Elect Bob Ferguson released his [budget priorities for FY25-27](#). If you read any news coverage on it over the weekend, their focus was Ferguson's desire to find \$4 billion in cuts to the budget before considering any new tax measures. I want to instead point your attention to an emerging trend that convinces me our new Governor will not bring the same energy and interest that his predecessor did to the issues that are important to conservation districts.

As a gubernatorial candidate, Ferguson didn't do much more than put his toe into the water of the natural resources world. On his campaign website, his views on "protecting the environment" constituted seven sentences split between two paragraphs. Three sentences were about lawsuits he won as attorney general, three sentences on his actions against the Trump administration, and one sentence about his experience as a backpacker and climber. His transition team after his election follows the same pattern: the current and the former CEO's of the Washington Conservation Voters, three members from Washington tribes, and two state legislators who happen to be from agricultural areas out of a transition team of fifty-six people.

In the Governor-Elect's budget priorities document, he spells out his proposals on public safety, housing, ferries, school lunches, and childcare. He also details his forthcoming directives to state agencies on cost cutting and the reduction of agency budgets. But nowhere in those sixteen pages is there any mention of agriculture,

natural resources, or the environment.

Looking into the crystal ball, I'm not sure of the implications if Governor Ferguson decides to defer to his policy team and the natural resource cabinet agencies on our issues. We just don't know enough yet about who he plans to surround himself with in the Governor's Mansion, whether executive delegation would be positive or negative. Either way, it will be worth tracking to see how much time and attention the state's executive head wishes to allocate to Washington's landscapes compared to the last twelve years of Governor Inslee.

We will see how Governor-Elect Ferguson operates once his term begins on January 15th.



"Unexpected Snow Fall on a Site Visit", courtesy of [WSCC's Flickr account](#), as a treat for those who read to the bottom of the page.

Taken by Eli Loftis, Okanogan CD



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