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Five Things to Know

October 8, 2020



Five Things WACD Wants You to Know

1. "For Members" page created on website

WACD is committed to increasing transparency with our members. To help with that, we have created a "for members" page on the website (in this usage, "members" means everyone in our conservation community). Visit <https://wadistricts.org/members> using the password **WACD1942** (all caps). We'll put adopted resolutions in this space along with additional budget and legislative information as that surfaces.

2. It is Area Association meeting time!

Welcome to October when our six area associations gather together in preparation for WACD's annual conference. Summary information about each area association meeting is listed on the [For Members page](#) and more information on each area meeting is available on the [Our Area Associations page](#).

3. Two surveys for your attention

Please participate in the NACD DEI survey – During the National Association of Conservation Districts's 2020 Summer Board Meeting, the NACD Board of Directors took up, voted on, and approved a formal [statement on diversity, equity and inclusion](#). The statement included creation of

a task force to provide recommendations back to the board on DEI issues for NACD and the 3,000 conservation districts represented by NACD. NACD's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force began work earlier this fall and needs feedback from conservation districts. The survey by NACD at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZYGNSWD> will take about five minutes to complete. This survey will remain open until October 23.

Should WDFW be added to the Commission? – Do you think that the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife should have a voting seat on the Washington State Conservation Commission? The Commission has a survey out to collect the opinions from our conservation district community. [Read more about it](#) and then [take the survey](#). The deadline for your input is October 30.

4. WACD Board to meet November 16

Board of Directors meeting – The WACD Board of Directors will meet on November 16 to conduct regular Association business. This meeting would normally be held in conjunction with the WACD Annual Conference but this year, we felt that we could provide more value to conference registrants if we held the regular meeting early. Meeting information will be announced on the [Board of Directors Meetings page](#) two weeks before the board meeting on November 2nd, per WACD procedure.

Legislative priorities work session – Prior to that meeting, your area director may contact you to learn your priorities for legislative this year. Your input will help inform the WACD Board at a work session to discuss legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative cycle. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss a more comprehensive, coordinated process for crafting our legislative priorities. From this work will come draft priorities to discuss at the annual conference where resolutions and additional discussion will help to further refine WACD's legislative priorities.

5. Reminder: How to support WSCC budget packages

Two weeks ago, the Conservation Commission released [fact sheets on the operating budget and the capital budget](#). We encourage conservation districts to express support for those budget proposals. To that end, we have a [sample support letter available](#) to help you in drafting your own letter. Letters of support should be submitted before October 30.

For Christmas, give the gift of Envirothon!

From our friends at the Washington Conservation Society

Dear Conservation Family,

We ask you to consider designating the Washington Conservation Society as your [AmazonSmile charity](#). Donations created from purchases made October 1, 2020 thru January 31, 2021 will go toward supporting the [Washington State Envirothon](#). Recent budget cuts, COVID19, and other challenges have put the amazing Envirothon education program at risk. Please join us in supporting this wonderful and worthwhile program by [giving the gift of the Envirothon for Christmas!](#)

Area Association meetings in October

As is the case every year, fall is a busy time for WACD, members, and partners!

- *Completed: October 7: Northwest Area Association work session*
 - October 13: North-Central Area Association
 - October 15: Southwest Area Association
 - October 20: Northeast Area Association
 - October 21: Northwest Area Association
 - October 28: Southeast Area Association
 - October 29: South Central Area Association
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Executive Corner

Dear weblinx,

This morning (Thursday) at 7 am I was working on this Five Things newsletter while virtually attending the Kittitas County CD board meeting. The KCCD folks are an awesome group: experienced, deeply capable, and incredibly effective. As I was listening to the meeting, the clouds parted and brilliant sunshine streamed in. And as so often happens with me, a song lyric popped into my head:

*The sun is up, the sky is blue
It's beautiful and so are you*

That comes, of course, from [Dear Prudence](#) on the Beatles' White Album. Many thanks to the KCCD group for helping me remember what wonderful people we have in our conservation district community. That was a special moment.

It's funny sometimes how memories emerge when triggered by things like the view of a particular landscape, or a smell, or in this case, the juxtaposition of people I enjoy and the dawning of the morning sun. Most of my memories are of landscapes and people from all across the great State of Washington so I treasure these little surprises when they emerge, seemingly out of nowhere.

OK, that's more than enough about me. Let's talk about you...and WACD dues!

The amount of dues support asked of conservation districts has been, and continues to be, an almost guaranteed point of discussion every year with our members. Nobody likes to talk about dues. When budgets are limited – and they always are in conservation districts! – it can be hard to justify an expense that may seem to not have immediate, tangible, quantifiable benefits.

Let's take a few minutes to examine dues. *Disclaimer: I am not presenting a proposal, nor am I stating a position or preference on different dues structures!* By the way, the data for this column is available on the WACD "for members" page at <https://wadistricts.org/members>. You'll need the password, and here it is, in all caps: **WACD1942** (that represents the year that WACD was formed). Once you are there, look under the "Other" tab.

WACD dues over the past 20 years

I examined dues assessments by district for the past 20 years (2001-2020). Here are some numbers during that time period:

- Maximum dues assessed by district: \$5,520
- Minimum dues assessed by district: \$0
- Average dues assessed by district: \$3,093
- Median dues assessed by district: \$3,120

These dues assessment figures don't have enough context. I say that because the total dues assessed per year across all conservation districts ranged from a low of \$105,600 to a high of \$177,360. (The total for 2020 is \$175,000.05.) The statistical results above don't reveal how they compare to the total dues each year.

Better context for the annual dues as assessed is created by turning them into percentages, i.e., what percentage of the total dues assessed in a year was a conservation district assessed? For 2020 with the flat/equal dues structure, each district was assessed 2.2% of the \$175,000.05 total. How does that compare over the past 20 years? Interesting results emerge from that calculation:

- Maximum dues as percentage: 3.4%
- Minimum dues as percentage: 0%
- Average dues as percentage: 2.0%
- Median dues as percentage: 2.2%

That median dues number of 2.2% over 20 years of WACD costs spread across member districts is exactly what WACD assessed in 2020. I was pleasantly surprised to discover this.

PMC contributions

During this 20-year timeframe, WACD costs have grown, just like they have for every one of our conservation districts. How, then, is WACD assessing the 2.2% median value? How has WACD covered those increasing costs? Seemingly hidden behind the total dues assessed is the offset in WACD costs provided by revenue generated by the Plant Materials Center. Let's look at that data.

In 2020, the PMC contributed \$75,000 to offset the cost of WACD operations. That contribution effectively reduces the amount of dues assessed to members. This year, that \$75,000 equates to \$1,666.67 less dues assessed per district. Reducing dues assessed to member conservation districts was one of the primary reasons for creating WACD, along with providing high-quality conservation-grade native plants for restoration work.

For more context, the PMC has contributed \$875,000 to help with operating WACD since fiscal year 2004-2005. That is a huge chunk of money that WACD did not seek from members in the form of dues assessments. (And let's not forget the visionary leaders who launched down this road nearly 30 years ago or the great people who work so hard to make the PMC perform so well!)

Takeaways

My takeaways from this review are:

1. The current dues structure is consistent with the median dues assessed over a 20-year period. WACD is not assessing more as a percentage of operating cost than usual.
2. Often hidden from view is the highly significant annual contribution made by the Plant Materials Center operation that effectively keeps WACD dues lower than they would otherwise be.

What else can we do on the revenue side?

But that's not where my thinking stops. On the revenue side of our house, what are our options to gather more resources so that our member districts pay less? There are a number of things we could do, or try to do.

First, the more entities that purchase plants from the Plant Materials Center, the better for all of Washington's conservation districts. If you are not utilizing your Plant Materials Center, you are losing out on opportunities to increase the level of support provided by PMC sales. Even if you don't have an annual plant sale, you probably have partners who need plants or who have plant sales. Help us all by recommending the [WACD PMC](#) to them.

Second, WACD can seek more grants. This sounds easy but it's a heavy lift for us because we are not a charitable nonprofit. We are a nonprofit trade association (like a chamber of commerce) created for the purpose of improving business conditions for our members. Foundation grants are usually limited to charitable nonprofits so WACD is not eligible to directly receive funds from such sources. We can look at other sources such as government grants. We don't want to compete for limited dollars with conservation districts so we have walked very lightly on this particular path. It bears consideration as a future direction we could take.

Third, we can come up with more ways to generate revenue. While WACD-branded apparel sounds great to me, it would never generate significant revenue. Realistically, how many of us want to wear a WACD hat? Right, that's what I thought! What else can we do? We already have assets that might be able to be better utilized to generate more money. The money that WACD holds in reserve could, perhaps, be more aggressively invested. Some of that money needs to be protected because it acts as self-insurance against operating losses. There is also a category I'll call "excess cash reserve" that gives us flexibility in managing the feast-or-famine cash flow of the Association. It is the excess cash reserve that we could consider putting at increased risk to possibly generate greater investment returns.

The WACD Finance Committee has been looking at the reserves held by WACD and will make recommendations to the WACD Board of Directors in November. Once the Board settles on those amounts, we will have a clearer idea of how much money could be put to work harder. One scenario could be that the Board decides to more aggressively invest a set amount of money, and then designates a portion of any earnings to be used to offset dues assessed to member districts. That idea has not been presented but it is floating in the back of at least a few minds.

Fourth, WACD could seek to help districts find money. How? We could hire or contract with a grant writer to help conservation districts seek more funding. Although this doesn't generate more money for WACD, it could help districts generate more revenue so that they are able to pay dues with less impact on their operation. (Helping conservation districts find more financial resources fits [our draft vision statement](#): "*WACD aspires to fully support conservation districts in their implementation of locally developed conservation programs.*") Another possibility for such a person would be to invest

energy in grant seeking in combination with a charitable non-profit organization to fund larger projects, and I can think of none better than our partner, the [Washington Conservation Society](#).

Well. This column is starting to leak into the realm of [strategic planning](#)! That's okay because when we increase capacity and reduce the burden placed on our members, that is a strategic action with a very positive outcome. Stay tuned as some of these ideas move forward, and as always, any [feedback you provide will be welcome](#).

Be safe and stay well. You are in our thoughts every day.

Tom Salzer, Executive Director

exec@wadistricts.org

More from the WACD Plant Materials Center...

COVID-19 Update – Skagit County remains in phase 2 and all employees remain healthy. A total of 1,147 cases have been reported in Skagit County so far, which is 36 more than this time last week. There were nine new cases in the past day. The Governor has allowed counties to advance to the next phase of reopening if specific criteria are met. At the rate things are going, Skagit County may not qualify to go to phase 3 in two weeks time. Hopefully everyone can be careful and do their part to get to phase 3. And hopefully things do not get worse and workplace regulations do not become too stringent as we transition into harvest mode!

September Financials – Lori has finished the financial reports for September. That represents only three months of the fiscal year so not too many variances stand out yet. One line on the statement of financial position to point out is the net income. It shows that for the month of September the net revenue was a negative \$47,632, which is typical for this time of year. Harvest and shipping will not begin until December so until then there is not much cash coming in. As harvest begins payroll increases and the PMC cash flow will remain negative until March.

The PMC profit and loss report shows that 93% of the chemical budget has been spent. That also is typical. Most of those costs are incurred during the summer and there won't be too many more expenses this fiscal year. One expense that is surprisingly similar to last year is seasonal labor. It is \$500 over the same time last year. What is surprising about this is that minimum wage is 12 % higher than this time last year. Kudos go out to our hard-working crew.

IRS – A funny thing happened on the way to the mail box the other day. There was a check from the IRS in it. It turns out they refunded our income tax payment from the 2018 return. That was a good year financially and it looked like we had an unprecedented tax liability of over \$20,000. We contacted our accountant and he was just as surprised as we were. He recommended contacting the IRS to see what was going on, which we did. Their response was that we did not owe any income tax that year and our payment was fully refunded with interest. We reported our findings to the accountant and are awaiting their recommendation of what to do next. This is not the first time that the IRS has sent us money so we will see what develops.

Fall Seed Planting Continues – As mentioned in a previous update, we have started planting seeds for those species that are propagated via fall sowing. The photo below shows one step of

seed prep. It is a bucket of Red Osier Dogwood seeds with a grey granular product added in. The granules are spores of beneficial mycorrhizal fungi. The seeds germinate in the spring, causing the spores to germinate and grow. The fungi then grow into the roots of the young seedlings which develop into a symbiotic relationship. The fungi grow far and wide in the soil resulting in increased uptake of water and nutrients for the plant. The fungi get sugars from the host plant. The mycorrhizal fungi are also believed to increase the plants ability to resist pests and diseases, process nutrients to more plant-available forms, and possibly even communicate. Studies have shown that electrical signals pass between plants thorough the fungi. It is also hypothesized that stressed plants may get additional nutrients from other plants through the fungi. It is pretty interesting stuff and we do what we can to help the plants participate in this network.

Life Goes On – Fall is in full swing. The days are shorter and colder. Much more attention is paid to the weather. The amount of time below 40° F is tracked, which provides information on how dormant the stock is. When we accumulate over 300 hours below 40° most plants are dormant. So far there are zero hours below 40. That brings us to the second concern about the weather in the fall which is watching for a sudden cold snap. If the temperature drops much below freezing when the plants are not yet dormant, significant damage may result. If such a weather event is predicted then preparations are made for frost protection. That involves running the irrigation system during a cold snap. Turning on irrigation during when it is very dark and cold seems counterintuitive but the water has latent heat which provides a few more degrees of protection and can make all the difference between plants living or dying. Hopefully we have a nice transition to winter and frost protection becomes a non-issue.



More from the WACD Executive Office...

Area and annual meetings – Workload has skyrocketed for Ryan and Tom as they assist with six area meetings (plus a work session) and prepare the final details of the WACD Annual Conference. We are busy! Stay tuned as we work our way through the season and [we always welcome your feedback](#).

Commission items (photography contest, social media guidelines) – As we've come to expect, the Conservation Commission continues to provide some wonderful materials. The [fact](#)

[sheets about their budget requests](#) are great current examples. The Commission also shared [social media guidelines for conservation districts](#). And don't forget the [photography contest deadline](#) which is tomorrow (Friday, October 9)!

Reminder: WACD awards due October 30th – [WACD's Annual Awards Program is now available](#). Please nominate an outstanding member of Washington State's conservation community who deserves recognition. Nominations are due to [Lori McLaughlin](#) by October 30th and winners will be announced in coordination with the WACD annual conference.

Links to what we are reading

Below are links to interesting items we are reading. Disclaimer: inclusion of these links in this newsletter do not imply official WACD support or endorsement of particular positions or information. Some news sources may be behind paywalls.

A few items from the list below stand out as having deep value for some of our community members. They may not be everyone's cup of tea but they promise to be thought provoking!

- [Change Management Hub](#) (compendium of articles about change)
- [State of Remote Work 2020](#) (survey results)
- [Dexter Dias: Racism thrives on silence -- speak up!](#) (A TED Talk)

Conservation Community

- [National Conservation Foundation announces new logo and fall fundraising campaign](#)
- [Call for Nominations: Olin Sims Conservation Leadership Award](#) (due by October 23)
- [10-01-20 NACD PRESIDENT PALMER TESTIFIES TO CONGRESS ON CONSERVATION PROGRAMS](#) | BARN OnAir & OnLine 24/7/365
- [Reminder to Submit Nominations for Hugh Hammond Bennett Awards by October 1](#) | National Conservation Planning Partnership
- Job: [Skagit CD Seeks ACEP Liaison Project Position](#)
- Job: [Thurston CD Seeks Habitat Specialist](#)
- Job: [Jefferson County CD Seeks District Manager](#)
- Job: [Employment Opportunities: Finance Specialist | Palouse CD](#)
- Job: [Area Foresters](#), Puget Sound region **AND**
- [Area Forester and Forest Stewardship Program Coordinator](#)
- Job: [Position Opening: Engineer-In-Training, Snohomish CD](#)
- Job: [Livestock Conservation Planner, Clark Conservation District](#) (temporarily closed for applications, reopening around September 30, 2020)
- Job: [Riparian Habitat Stewardship Coordinator, King Conservation District \(Renton, WA\)](#)

Advocacy

- [NACD President Testifies In Front Of House Ag Sub Committee On Conservation](#) | Radio 570 WNAX

Agriculture / Food

- [Why people are flocking to ugly produce during the pandemic](#) | CNN
- [Shellfish Seed Grants](#) | Impact Washington
- [U.S. farm landscapes could be reshaped by changing climate - research](#) | Successful Farming
- [WSU extension office helps farmers overcome suicide, mental health issues](#) | The Daily Evergreen

Budget / Economy

- [Legislators respond with optimism and caution to increased revenue projection](#) | Washington State Wire
- [The Budgetary Hangover from COVID-19](#) | PA TIMES Online

Climate

- [Climate Change: 2020 Could Be the Hottest Year On Record, Scientists Say](#) | Bloomberg
- [Trillions of extra economic damages predicted in new study of climate change effects](#) | Phys.org
- [The Earth Is on Fire](#) | Scientific American
- [Scientists didn't expect wildfires this terrible for another 30 years](#) | Grist
- [The World Hits Hottest September on Record, Again](#) | Time
- [Seagrass restoration speeds recovery of ecosystem services](#) | Phys.org

COVID / Pandemic

- [Face masks: what the data say](#) | Nature
- [CDC says coronavirus can spread indoors in updated guidance](#) | AP News
- [Fall and winter could bring increases in COVID-19 cases in Washington state](#) | king5.com
- [Trust in science rose during the pandemic: survey](#) | Axios

Diversity / Equity / Inclusion

- [Dexter Dias: Racism thrives on silence -- speak up!](#) | TED Talk - *Note: This TED Talk was recommended by one of our conservation district members*

Fire

- [The August Complex is now a 'gigafire,' a rare designation for a blaze that burns at least a million acres](#) | CNN
- [4 Million Acres Burned In California As Wildfire Season Continues](#) | NPR
- [The lessons for how to avoid massive fires are there. Are we willing to change?](#) | The Pacific Northwest Inlander
- [During wildfires, West Coast farmworkers forced to put harvest over health](#) | Crosscut

- [Good Fire Projects Planned Across Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest](#) | NewsRadio 560 KPQ
- Prescribed burns on the Colville National Forest: [U.S. Forest Service - Colville National Forest - Posts](#) | Facebook

Fundraising / grant writing

- [Observations and advice on grant writing from the other side of the desk](#) | PSGA Ken's Corner

Government (State and Federal)

- [WSDA proposes changing its name](#) | capitalpress.com

Invasives

- [Washington State Officials Hunt for Colony of 'Murder Hornets'](#) | The Pacific Northwest Inlander
- [Search underway for murder hornets nest in Washington state](#) | Fox News
- [Signs of Asian giant hornet nest found in Washington state](#) | AP News

Management / Leadership

- [Change Management Hub](#) | Management Issues - *Note: There are some great topics in this compendium of change-related topics, like: "What the hell, I'll give it a go" and "Top strategies for embracing change" and "Change management: it's the people, stupid" and "Principles before principles"*
- [State of Remote Work 2020](#) | Owl Labs - *"How employees across the US feel about working remotely in a post- COVID-19 world, their new workplace expectations and what employers need to know to recruit and retain top talent."*
- [How Narcissism and Leadership Go Hand-in-Hand](#) | Psychology Today
- [Covid-19 and the hazards of experts](#) | Management Issues
- [Proposal: Treat Employees as Stakeholders](#) | PA TIMES Online
- [These public speaking techniques can help you look smart on video calls](#) | Popular Science
- [The Tao of Emotions](#) | Psychology Today

Soil

- [USDA grants American Farmland Trust \\$2.6 million to improve soil health practice adoption](#) | hpj.com
- [Your soil health questions answered](#) | Successful Farming
- [Soil Health 'Bundled Benefits' are Getting More Attention](#) | No-Till Farmer
- [Constant crop canopy improves soil health](#) | Farm Progress
- [Critical Agents of Change at Earth's Surface](#) | Eos

State

- [Washington Ecology to stick with Obama WOTUS](#) | capitalpress.com

Technology / Cyber

- [Ransomware: Surge in attacks as hackers take advantage of organisations under pressure](#) | ZDNet
- [It's 2020 – better #BeCyberSmart](#) | Office of the Washington State Auditor
- [Google Meet is getting two new Zoom features](#) | Android Police
- [What Is Google Workspace, and Does It Fully Replace G Suite?](#) | HowToGeek
- [Google's new alert means something has gone terribly wrong](#) | Fast Company

Weather

- [Yakima's First Snowfall: The Date You Should Expect to See White!](#) | 929 The Bull
- [La Niña Impacting Winter Weather Forecast](#) – NewsRadio 560 KPQ
- And something special for all weather geeks in our community: the [Pacific Analysis map](#) from the Ocean Prediction Center (click on the [Full Pacific link](#) for a larger view)

Partners and Publications

This content has been moved to the [WACD members-only page](#) for the sake of brevity.

WACD hears you and is here for you!

We welcome your [feedback](#).



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