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Five Things to Know

December 10, 2020

Keep bidding to support Envirothon!

Time is running out to support Envirothon through their auction! The Envirothon auction was extended to Tuesday, December 15th at 5:00 pm. Yes, that is this coming Tuesday! Bid now to support Envirothon. The auction is being held on the [BiddingOwl auction site](#).

1. Follow-up from the conference & business meeting

Resolutions – Tomorrow, we'll begin working with the WACD Executive Committee to review the resolutions adopted by WACD members at the annual business meeting. At least one of those resolutions will result in the creation of a committee on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. We will also be working with the State Conservation Commission on election issues. The summary table of adopted resolutions is posted on the [Members page](#) under the Resolutions tab.

2. We need your survey responses!

WACD's Conference Planning Team needs to know how the conference went for you. Please complete the online survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BV5Z2BV>. The Team will use your responses in developing an after action report to help guide us in planning the 2020 conference.

3. Annual Plan Work Group meets tonight

WACD's new strategic plan is the starting point as we begin work on a WACD work plan for calendar year 2021. A work group has been formed, consisting of three conservation district board supervisors and three district managers. All six areas in the state are represented. That group meets for the first time tonight. The timeline on crafting the annual work plan is short: we'll have a proposed plan ready by January 15th for the WACD Board of Directors to review at their meeting on January 18th.

4. Busy times at the PMC

The WACD Plant Materials Center is a little light on staff this week, and that means that PMC Nursery Manager Jim Brown is splitting his time between the lifter and the packing shed! Our quick

PMC report this week is that everything is going OK. The PMC shipped out a 60,000-plant order yesterday and the crew is continuing to bring in plants to fill orders. Since Jim is so busy this week, this entry constitutes the entirety of the PMC report this week!

5. New office, new phone number

New office – Ryan and Tom are finally moved into the new WACD offices in Olympia at [1219 11th Avenue SE](#). "Moved in" really means we have computers and desks, but we are only working there sporadically during this time of COVID restrictions. Please note that visitors are by appointment only.



New phone – We also have a new phone number – **(360) 999-5151** – but no phones yet. (The phones will be installed next week.) Extension 101 for Tom is working now. When Ryan returns from vacation his extension will be 102. The new phone system will provide a single doorway to reach Tom and Ryan. We will be able to access calls and messages from almost anywhere and that will be a great help as we seek to continually improve our service to WACD members.

Newly adopted resolutions

A summary of resolutions adopted by WACD members at the annual conference are posted on the [Members page](#) under the Resolutions tab.

Resolutions will be discussed at the next meeting of the WACD Board of Directors. That meeting will be a work session on the evening of Monday, January 18, 2021. We expect to have a draft annual work plan available at that meeting. That draft plan will include proposed actions and timing for

resolutions.

2020-01: WACD Revolving Fund to Build CD Capacity

Resolved, WACD shall investigate the advisability of establishing a revolving fund to provide lines of credit to districts with demonstrated need for funds to capture grant or contract funding. It shall report back by September 1, 2021.

2020-02: Support SCC operating and capital budget requests for FY21-23 biennium

WACD will work closely with all conservation districts statewide, SCC and other partners, to fully support the SCC operating and capital budget requests for the FY21-23 biennium through contacts with the Governor's Office of Financial Management and Legislators.

2020-03: Extending Electronic Training Resources

WACD supports the increased use of electronic and remote learning opportunities as a part of training programs for conservation districts that is provided by state conservation agencies and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

2020-04: Rural Broadband Internet Access

WACD supports increased rural broadband internet and cell phone access, infrastructure, and affordability for all working lands and residents.

2020-05: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Statement & Work Plan Development

WACD will convene a committee to develop a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy recommendation by September 2021. This recommendation will be provided to all Conservation Districts for consideration at their Area Meetings with action by the WACD at its annual meeting.

The Committee will also provide information, suggested resources, and guidance for districts that are interested in developing their own diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

2020-06: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Statement

WACD will create a DEI Committee that will consider the following actions and develop any recommendations by September 2021 to all Conservation Districts for consideration at their Area Meetings for possible action by the WACD at its annual meeting. to include but not limited to the following:

1. The Commission and WACD help conservation districts to work with underrepresented communities in their service area to understand what natural resource concerns are important to them and to find ways to incorporate those natural resources concerns into the conservation district's book of business.
2. To encourage conservation districts to prioritize equity in the services they offer and in employment decisions.
3. That the Commission and WACD organize annual diversity, equity, and inclusion seminars that are made available to all Conservation District Supervisors and Managers.
4. That WACD and the Commission work with districts to make elections more public and to ensure that communities of color are engaged around elections.
5. That the commission recruits and retains a diversity, equity, and inclusion officer that will work with the election's officer to promote engagement of communities of color across the

state and address the disparity gap around services and elections.

6. That WACD asks conservation districts and the Washington State Conservation Commission to take actions to encourage more diversity in conservation district supervisor positions both elected and appointed.

2020-09: WACD Member Services Review

WACD to engage the Association's membership to understand the possible need for more shared services resources or different services resources from the Association and then research ways of providing important support to conservation districts.

2020-10: Conservation District Election Improvements

WACD is committed to working with the Legislature and Washington State Conservation Commission on election issues.

Executive Corner

Dear weblinx,

We are slow to change and it comes naturally to us. Please don't be dismayed by the seemingly glacial pace of change in our conservation district community.

Some folks came away from the WACD business meeting feeling relieved and some with a sense of disappointment. We didn't find the Goldilocks zone on conservation district elections or on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The resolutions as proposed seemed either too hot or too cold for our people. Eventually, we got there on the DEI resolutions but just barely, so I hesitate to call it a "just right" position that is widely supported.

Changes can disrupt the delicate balance in any business or organization. For example, every year farmers must plan for a multitude of unexpected variables that Mother Nature throws at them. The production styles they choose to utilize evolved from a long history of what works year in and year out. Sticking with what works is usually the safe choice.

So in that context, change can be viewed as something dangerous. It can shift the balance away from profitability and result in a money-losing year. (Picture having a couple of losing cycles with only 40 or 50 paydays in a career of working the land. It takes years to get out of a losing year so avoiding those losses is key to maintaining a viable operation.)

Sometimes it feels like our people must all be from Missouri, the "show me" state. Someone who wants us to try something different has to make an awfully compelling case to get our buy in!

So with that as the backdrop to our present day conservation district community, is it a surprise that significant changes are not immediately heralded with confetti and champagne? This year we heard calls to open up [Chapter 89.08 of the Revised Code of Washington](#), the Conservation Districts Law. Our people fear the prospect of opening up the law and that makes it hard to talk about what changes might make elections better.

We heard calls to dig deeper into diversity, equity, and inclusion. These are scary topics for many of

our folks who know in their hearts that they are not doing anything wrong. If they're not wrong, why then should they have to change? It feels to them as if changes are being imposed on them, almost like being punished.

And so we get to this point almost every year where some folks are frustrated by how slowly we embrace change and some are delighted by how slowly we evolve.

I think it comes naturally to us. It's a result of who we have been and who many of us still are. Change means increasing our risk and that is not how our people have made a go of using natural resources to produce food and fiber. Change is danger. Change is bad.

Another factor in play is the traditionally slow pace of change in government. When I was working for the Conservation Commission many years ago, I heard a lot of frustration about how slowly state government changed. I also heard a lot of fear that government changes could happen too quickly. My response was that government is not only designed to move slowly, it's a very desirable trait! Slow, methodical, intentional change takes time...sometimes a lot of time, and careful, well-planned changes protect us all.

The plodding pace of change in government helps to retain confidence in government. Consider the alternative scenario in which a government agency adopts changes quickly with little forethought and without considering the impacts on those who are served. The result is confusion, bedlam, retracting and backtracking, all to try to fix problems created because not enough time was invested to foresee and prevent those problems. We should feel good that government takes longer than we may like to change! That slower speed protects us, the governed, from harm.

"For Madison and the founders, the risks of tyranny inherent in speedy government action outweighed the risks of government that is too slow." - [Tom Ginsburg on the Benefits of Slow Government](#)

Our conservation districts have direct experience with change that happens too quickly. In 1999, legislation was adopted that required voters of the district to be registered voters of the county and to reside within the district. Nobody expected that a later interpretation would force conservation districts to go on the general ballot in 2001. The law was later modified to clarify the intent of the Legislature.

Elections for the year 2000 were conducted under the conservation district statutes. Since then, conflicting legal interpretations have arisen as to whether conservation district elections are to continue under the conservation district statutes or in accordance with the state general election law. Those elections held in the year 2001 were conducted under the general election law in accordance with guidance provided by the Attorney General's Office to the State Conservation Commission. Under the general election law, each participating entity is required to pay a prorated share of the cost of primary and general elections. - [Senate Bill Report SSB 6572](#)

Having a healthy fear of too-rapid government changes comes naturally to us. Significant changes need time to ripen, to be reviewed, to be analyzed. We need time to come to grips with what those changes may mean. We need time to make sure that the proposed changes are right for our

community and for our society.

"The reality is that government moves slowly, but for good reason. Establishing a budget, obtaining funds and executing the daily activities each government agency requires is no small task. You're working with a greater amount of funding for a greater amount of people, which means you must make small changes over time to ensure that they're effective." - [Why is government so slow? Expectation vs. reality](#)

OK, let me tie a ribbon around this. Your state association of conservation districts is formed of member conservation districts. The governing boards of those conservation districts are, in large part, the stalwart, intentional, persistent, honorable people who grow our vital food and fiber -- the same folks that generally stick with production and business methods that have worked for them for many years. WACD's board of directors is drawn from that population. A good chunk of the Washington State Conservation Commission's board comes from that same population.

"In the end, a slow, restrained government is a more thoughtful, careful, and hopefully good, government." - [It's good news that government is stalled](#)

When you recognize that our people across the state lean toward slow change as a usual, comfortable, safe way of doing business, is it any wonder that our people don't want to immediately embrace big changes? That would fly in the face of our history of sticking with what works.

It serves us well to move methodically and with consensus. In the long run, I believe that we are better served to come together with a single voice to express what we can all agree upon (or at least agree to live with). That is a far better scenario than approaching the Legislature with opposing recommendations. When we fail to come together as one body, some people win and some people lose. When we present a divided voice, our reputation and effectiveness suffers.

On conservation district elections, we are clearly a house divided at this point in time. On DEI topics, we are also divided as evidenced by the tie-breaker vote on one resolution. It is clear that we have more work to do within our conservation district family. If we push too hard, too soon, we end up imposing one view on a group that will not welcome or embrace it. That is not the outcome I want.

The outcome I prefer is one in which we agree on the need and the solution...or if we can't all agree, we at least agree that we can live with it. That takes time. It takes persistence. It takes a lot of conversations. It takes a whole lot more listening to each other and lot less talking at each other.

I celebrate the time it takes us to reach agreement because in the end, it makes us far more effective. It results in outcomes that work for all of our conservation districts. It yields lasting changes that don't have to be undone (like the 1999 legislation!) because of unforeseen consequences.

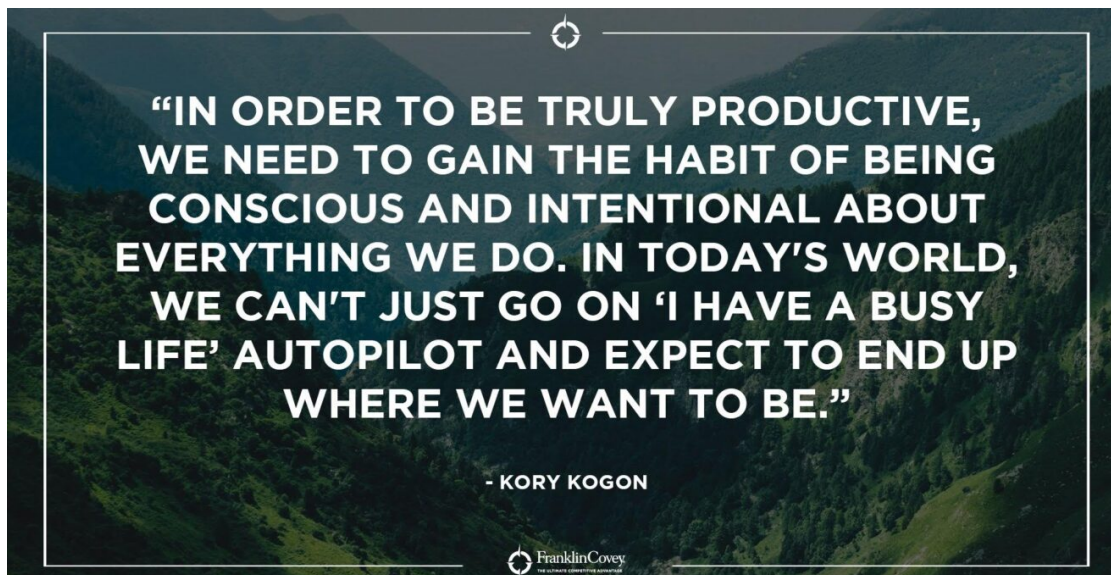
I'm not arguing against change. Rather, I'm arguing for change that is well considered, thoughtful, meaningful, and supported by our entire community. That kind of change requires a slow cooker to bring all of the flavors together into one harmonious, delicious dish. That is an outcome worth striving for. That process will take us to where we want to be.

My best always,

Tom Salzer, Executive Director

exec@wadistricts.org

P.S.: Ryan has been taking a well-earned break this week. He'll be back next week. Please join me in thanking him for a conference planning and delivery job well done!



More from the WACD Plant Materials Center...

Our folks are too busy for their usual report this week! You should see more information about what is happening at the PMC in next week's report.

Give the gift of Envirothon!

From our friends at the Washington Conservation Society: 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 WCS in supporting this wonderful and worthwhile program by [giving the gift of the Envirothon for Christmas!](#)

More from the WACD Executive Office...

It's a post-conference week with Ryan away for a needed break. Tom has been busy updating information on the website, preparing for the Annual Plan Work Group meeting, working on MOUs, and coordinating the Executive Committee's weekly call. Along the way we ordered the new phone system so that our members will have just one number to remember.

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.

Conservation community

- [NACD Urban Agriculture Conservation \(UAC\) Grant Initiative](#) | NACD - The deadline to apply is February 15, 2021 at 11:59 p.m., local time. [Click here](#) to access the online application form. To learn more about this initiative, contact NACD Pacific Region Representative [Ariel Rivers](#).
- [USDA Announces Increase to Certain Incentive Payments for Continuous Conservation Reserve Program](#) | FSA
- [USDA Engages Public for Input on Water Quantity in the West](#) | NRCS
- Job: [King CD seeks Ag Drainage Coordinator](#) (PDF)
- Job: [Asotin County CD seeks Archaeologist - Cultural Resource Specialist](#)
- Job: [Multiple opportunities to join the Palouse CD!](#)
- Job: [Jefferson County CD Seeks District Manager](#)
- Job: [Area Forester and Forest Stewardship Program Coordinator](#)
- Job: [Riparian Habitat Stewardship Coordinator, King Conservation District \(Renton, WA\)](#)

Agriculture / Food

- [Biden to tap Vilsack for Agriculture secretary: reports](#) | TheHill
- [EPA proposes limits on chlorpyrifos](#) | capitalpress.com
- [Forum addresses next four years of agricultural policy](#) | capitalpress.com

Climate / Weather

- [Weatherman predicts cold, wet winter in Northwest](#) | capitalpress.com

Conservation districts

- [Washington's upcoming conservation district elections sorely need progressive candidates](#) | NPI's Cascadia Advocate

COVID / Pandemic

- [Governor Announces Current Washington Business Closures Will Extend Into The New Year](#) | Northwest Public Broadcasting *AND* [Gov. Inslee extends statewide ban on indoor dining, gatherings to January](#) | My Northwest
- [COVID-19](#) | Washington State Department of Health
- [COVID-19 situation in Snohomish County considered 'severe' with numbers off the charts](#) | king5.com

- [Overcrowded Local Hospitalizations Forces Transfer Outside Region for Medical Attention](#) | NewsRadio 560 KPQ
- [Here's what you can and can't do under Washington's new coronavirus restrictions](#) | Seattle PI

Fire

- [Three months after the fire, Malden's recovery effort is on the shoulders of local leaders](#) | The Spokesman-Review
- [Scientists say WA wildfire management must go beyond forests](#) | Crosscut

Fish / Wildlife / ESA

- [Fisheries in a flask? Loose DNA in seawater offers a new measure of marine populations](#) | Science | AAAS
- [Salmon have been dying mysteriously on the West Coast for years. Scientists think a chemical in tires may be responsible](#) | CNN
- [WDFW: Public demands action on wolves](#) | capitalpress.com
- [Much More Than A Spotted Owl Fight: Northwest 'Timber Wars' Of 30 Years Ago Revisited In Podcast](#) | Northwest Public Broadcasting

Health

- [CDC urges 'universal' indoor mask use when not at home](#) | TheHill
- [Moderna, Pfizer, AstraZeneca covid vaccines: What you need to know](#) - The Washington Post

Invasives

- [WDFW Discovers Record Number Invasive Species on Boats in 2020](#) | NewsRadio 560 KPQ

Management / Leadership

- [7 ways to professionally decline an unnecessary Zoom meeting](#) | The Optimist Daily: Making Solutions the News
- [Professional and Personal Pointers for Credible Communication](#) | PA TIMES Online
- [Strategies for Managing Difficult Public Meetings and Hearings](#) | MRSC

Soil

- [There's an ecosystem beneath your feet—and it needs protection, new report says](#) | Science | AAAS
- [Global soils underpin life but future looks 'bleak', warns UN report](#) | The Guardian

Water

- [New WOTUS rules won't affect state's regulations](#) | WAWG
- [Wildfires harmed Oregon water quality, experts say](#) | capitalpress.com
- [Investors can now trade water futures](#) | CNN

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Many thanks to our generous sponsors for helping us support Washington State's conservation districts. Find links to these organizations at <https://wadistricts.org/conference/sponsors>



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