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Five Things to Know

December 17, 2020

The Winter Solstice edition!



The shortest day of the year (and the longest night) is Monday, December 21st, otherwise known as the [Winter Solstice](#).

For all of Earth's creatures, nothing is so fundamental as the length of daylight. After all, the sun is the ultimate source of all light and warmth on Earth. - [EarthSky.com](#)

The Winter Solstice signals a shift to longer days and shorter nights for those of us in the northern hemisphere. And if the idea of the Winter Solstice doesn't make your day a little brighter, [December 21st is also a special day for other things](#).

1. Governor's budget published today

Governor Jay Inslee rolled out his FY21-23 budget this week with [detailed information released this](#)

[afternoon](#) (Thursday). There are several hundred pages to read through, on our initial read-through the Governor's proposed budget is a pleasant surprise for Commission funding. There is no across the board cut as was earlier feared, instead there are increases in several places. The big asterisk to this budget being submitted to the Legislature is Governor Inslee affords his spending increases with a capital gains tax and tapping into the state's 'rainy day fund.' [View the Budget & Policy Highlights released today.](#)

2. NE and SE Area Director vacancies

Ryan will be reaching out to the Northeast Area Association and the Southeast Area Association regarding recruiting a new Area Director in each of those areas.

3. Legislative action to be virtual

WACD will be operating virtually for the 2021 Legislative session. That means that our outreach will have to be virtual as well. We expect to have a special event (probably not a Legislative Day but could be a Legislative Week) during session so stay tuned for more information on this in January.

4. COVID and the PMC

Last week two employees tested positive for COVID-19 and were then quarantined. The Skagit County Health Department requested that all employees be tested to make sure that they did not get it here. Everyone was given Tuesday afternoon off with pay to get tested. A couple of people were tested on Wednesday and two on Thursday. It looks like out of 25 people tested, 21 tests came back negative and four tests are still pending; hopefully their tests will come back negative as well. Every morning, everyone has their temperature checked and we have asked them a few health questions, and so far, nobody has shown any fever or other COVID symptoms. Everyone wears masks and the facility has never been cleaner.

5. New WACD-Oly phone number

The new phone system is installed and working in the WACD Olympia office. Dial 360-999-5151 to reach Ryan or Tom. We made a slight change to the extensions: Ryan is at extension 100 and Tom is at extension 101. We are still making modifications to the configuration of the system so please do let us know if you encounter a hiccup when calling the Olympia office.

Newly adopted resolutions

A summary of resolutions adopted by WACD members at the annual conference is posted on the [Members page](#) under the Resolutions tab (password **password removed**). A table showing the current status of the recently adopted 2020 resolutions is also 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.

Executive Corner

Dear weblinx,

We appreciate you. We care about you. You are part of our wide conservation family. Our people care about each other and that feels pretty good. That feeling is made more poignant and impactful as we look at the continuing saga of COVID-19 in our communities and across our country. There is no better time than right now to tell people how much you care about them.

(We also demonstrate how much we care through the way we behave toward each other. For example, [these behaviors](#) say to the other person that they are respected and liked: be a good listener, avoid arguments, keep your word, ask for advice, be honest.)

To me, working in our conservation district community is like living in a small town...the kind of place where you can't go anywhere without running into someone you know and where everyone you pass on the street greets you. (When I lived in Republic, I used to tell my friends that it's a place where, when you dial a wrong number, you talk for 30 minutes!) We know each other. We often know what the other person is going to say or do.

And we are multi-generational, which brings surprises and richness to our conversations yet also amplifies opportunities for miscommunication. We complain about each other and roll our eyes in secret at some of the behaviors our conservation family members exhibit.

That sounds like my family. And it sounds like every small town I've lived in in Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and Indonesia. In some ways, people are the same everywhere.

When times get tough our true character emerges. When someone in our family is sick or injured – when disaster strikes – we line up to help them. We drop what we're doing to lend a hand because we realize the threat to that person is far more important than what we are doing at that moment.

People in our community are amazing when sudden disaster strikes.

As we continue to face COVID-19, how many of us recognize that it is a slow-moving disaster on an immense scale? Unlike a fire or a flood, COVID is an invisible, silently spreading disaster that affects communities across the planet. Even with a vaccine, we will still be affected.

"Unfortunately, given that numbers are rising to all-time highs nationwide, experts say we're facing a long road with the virus. They say it will take a long time for the vaccine to have a pronounced effect while the pandemic persists." - [How Your Life Will \(and Won't\) Change After Getting the COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

We are really good at believing "it can't happen to me." I'd like to believe that, and I suppose at a deeper level than my intellect, I do believe that I won't get infected.

"You think it will never happen to you, that it cannot happen to you, that you are the only person in the world to whom none of these things will ever happen, and then, one by one, they all begin to happen to you, in the same way they happen to everyone else." - [Paul Auster](#)

This week – the week before Christmas week! – I really wanted to not see COVID-19 in the news,

a week where I could skip including links to important articles about it, a week where I wouldn't have to think about it. Like many of our people, I am tired of the emotional weight it imposes on me every moment of every day.

But it is circulating in our community. It is affecting people I know. It is a real threat that I have to take seriously. So I socially distance, I wear a mask, and I sanitize very frequently. When I'm at the grocery store, I work through my list quickly and I give others a wide berth. When I get in the car, I sanitize before I touch anything, and then I sanitize what I touched. I even sanitize the outside of the plastic cup containing my favorite morning iced latte!

I worry about my own health and would like to get through this pandemic unscathed, but I also worry about bringing the virus home and causing harm to my loved ones. This has become one of the most emotionally difficult times in my life, and I've had several, including: nearly losing my spouse twice, surviving a helicopter crash, miraculously stepping aside just before a mine cave in, getting trapped in a poisonous atmosphere after an unscheduled underground blast, getting stalked by a cougar with kits, getting lost on a solo hike in the Cascades...and more. Those were all brief but important punctuation marks in the timeline of my life. COVID-19 is lasting longer than those events and it is wearing me down.

The problem is that I care about other people, just as you do. As adults, we understand that COVID-19 could not only affect ourselves, it could affect other people we know and care about. It is an oppressive weight that just won't stop.

I'm not trying to convince you to be safe and to wear a mask. What you choose to believe will govern your actions. You've heard many facts and many opinions and have already decided what to believe. I know that nothing I say is likely to change the mind of anyone in our community.

We don't always believe things because they are correct. Sometimes we believe things because they make us look good to the people we care about. - [Why Facts Don't Change Our Minds](#)

What I do want to make sure you know is that there are many people in our community who care about you. What better time to say I care to someone else? We would say it in a sudden disaster, so why not now in as this continually spreading global disease bears down on us?

Thank you for the great heart and commitment you bring to your local community and to our wider conservation district family. We may not always agree but we always care!

If you have trouble finding the words that say "I care," this website has a list of suggestions: [52 Ways to Tell Someone You Love and Appreciate Them](#). Here are just a few from that list:

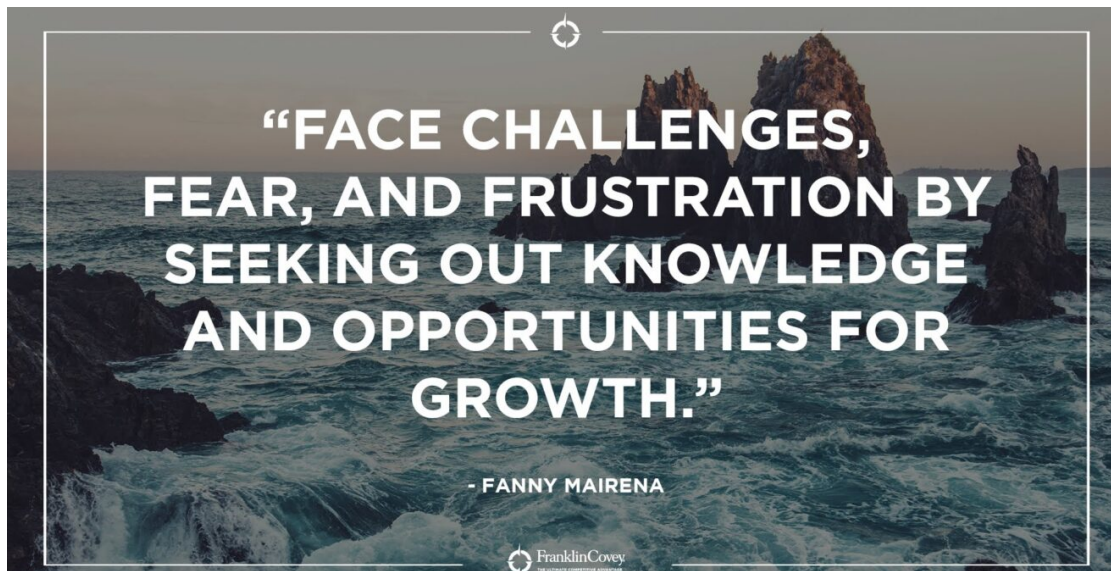
- I accept you as you are.
- I hear your voice even when we are not in the same place.
- Knowing you gives me courage.

I'll take a week off from this column for next week's 5 Things newsletter so that I can concentrate on my family. I hope you can find the time and energy to tell the people you care about that you do care.

My best always,

Tom Salzer, Executive Director

exec@wadistricts.org



More from the WACD Plant Materials Center...

Sales – It has been a couple of weeks since the last sales report and it is another day yet until the next one is complete. Sales were off by \$30,000, or 4%, at that time. Naturally with increasing costs one would like to see a corresponding increase in sales. Given the realities of the present time, however, that will have to do. Hopefully there will be opportunities to make up lost ground and surpass last year’s numbers.

November Financial Reports – The financial reports for November were published last week and look typical for this time of year. One thing that is typical this time of year is that the PMC’s cash flow is quite negative and its net revenues are also negative to the tune of -\$270,300. That is because additional labor is hired to start harvest but sales are slow until March, at which time revenues become positive (hopefully very positive). There are \$77,500 in aged receivables. \$56,500 of that are customer deposits on plants that haven’t shipped, \$21,000 are for plants shipped this season and only \$30 is from last year’s sales. Overall, the PMC is looking good on aged receivables. Revenues for the fiscal year are \$73,500 which is \$6,000 less than last year. Expenses are \$2,000 above last year so things are similar to last year overall.

The Holiday Season Nears – The PMC is going to be closed for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day so if anyone needs anything please let us know ASAP. We will also be closed for New Year’s. A short break is welcome after three weeks of harvest!

Life Goes On – In spite of having to stop for COVID testing, increased time for cleaning and sanitation, and having had four people out for 10 days in quarantine, plants continue to get lifted and processed. One of the attached photos shows the ever-increasing open areas in the field after 3 weeks of lifting. The other photo shows plants that were just lifted and awaiting processing in the cool room. Everything seems to be running normally in spite of the challenges this year.



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...

OACD resolution – The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts is moving a [resolution on ACEP-ALE funding](#), seeking supporters before they send it along to NACD. Unfortunately, this came to us just after the WACD annual business meeting so there was no opportunity for the membership to weigh in on it. We like what Oregon is wishing to do but we can't formally support it at this time.

Wildfire-related conversations – There are several things going on at the moment that related to wildfire and conservation districts. WACD has been having conversations to make sure that conservation districts are eligible to receive some wildfire funding. Simultaneously, the Department of Natural Resources is consulting stakeholders on draft legislation and the Department of Fish and Wildlife is discussing a possible budget proviso. The DNR draft identifies conservation districts in two topic areas: funding and Firewise-type activities. DFW would need help from districts to support habitat-friendly actions in the shrub-steppe environment (more specifically, those areas affected by the Whitney and Pearl Hill fires where habitat for sage grouse and pygmy rabbit were destroyed). Conversations with DFW indicate a strong desire to implement actions that are friendly to wildlife and humans, so it seems they recognize the need to support both creatures and communities.

New phones – If you missed it above, the WACD Olympia office has a new phone number: 360-

999-5151. Ryan is at extension 100 and Tom is at extension 101. We are still adjusting the configuration of the new phone system so let us know if it stumbles when you call!

Olympia office closed between Christmas and New Years – Ryan and Tom will be taking annual leave starting December 24th. Don't expect us back before January 4th!

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

- [USDA Seeks Public Input on Guidance Defining Nonindustrial Private Forest Land Eligibility](#) | NRCS
- [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: [Palouse seeks Grants and Development Manager](#)
- Job: [Jefferson County CD Seeks District Manager](#)
- Job: [Riparian Habitat Stewardship Coordinator, King Conservation District \(Renton, WA\)](#)

Agriculture / Food

- [Contaminated Former Orchards In Central Washington One Step Closer To Being Safer](#) | Northwest Public Broadcasting
- [Bee Better Certification Program is Buzzing on U.S. Farms, Local Grocers](#) | USDA

Budget / Legislature

- [Gov. Inslee's proposed 2021-23 budgets](#) | Office of Financial Management
- [Washington House releases plan for remote legislative session](#) | Columbian.com
- [Gov. Inslee Announces Climate Change Portion of Proposed Budget](#) – NewsRadio 560 KPQ *AND* [Inslee targets natural gas, proposes cap and trade](#) | capitalpress.com *AND* [Gov. Inslee unveils climate proposals ahead of full budget plan](#) | KIRO7

Climate / Weather

- [A Strengthening La Nina: What Does That This Imply for Our Upcoming Winter?](#) | Cliff Mass Weather Blog

COVID / Pandemic

- WA: [WA Notify app](#) | Washington State Department of Health (available for iPhone and Android devices)
- WA: [Lummi Nation orders shelter-in-place to control virus spread](#) | News Break
- USA: [US coronavirus: 200 hospitals have been at full capacity, and 1/3 of all US hospitals are almost out of ICU space as Covid-19 surges](#) | CNN
- USA: [A pandemic atlas: USA by the numbers, telling and horrifying](#) | AP News
- USA: [US coronavirus: As vaccines trickle across the US, more Americans are now hospitalized with Covid-19 than ever before](#) | CNN
- USA: [US Coronavirus: Nation surpasses 17 million official Covid-19 cases as FDA panel considers Moderna's vaccine candidate](#) | CNN
- USA: [Is Your Hospital Overwhelmed With COVID-19 Patients? Find Out With This Tool](#) | NPR
- UK: [New coronavirus strain spreading in UK has key mutations, scientists say](#) | Reuters
- WORLD: [A pandemic atlas: How COVID-19 took over the world in 2020](#) | AP News

Diversity / Equity / Inclusion

- [Jay Inslee Unveils Equity Proposals As Part Of Washington State Budget Plan](#) | Northwest Public Broadcasting
- [Municipal Diversity Plans: Transitioning from Performative to Purposeful](#) | PA TIMES Online

Fire

- [Summer wildfires left an unseen danger: Underground pits](#) | Tacoma News Tribune
- [Colorado looks to logging to help re-balance forests](#) | capitalpress.com
- [Amid A Pandemic Economy And Record Wildfires, Is It Time For A 21st-Century Civilian Conservation Corps?](#) | Colorado Public Radio
- [New Conservation Bill From Sen. Bennet Would Fund Wildfire Mitigation And River Clean-Ups, Create 2 Million Jobs](#) | Colorado Public Radio

Fish / Wildlife / ESA

- [Pacific Lamprey are spawning in the Okanogan basin](#) | tribaltribune.com
- [Trump administration narrows protection of habitat for endangered species](#) | The Hill
- [Conservationists sue feds over lack of wolverine protections](#) | capitalpress.com
- [Endangered Species Status Of Northern Spotted Owl Will Remain Unchanged](#) | Northwest Public Broadcasting
- [Feds sued for nixing grizzlies in Cascades](#) | capitalpress.com

Forest

- [USDA Seeks Public Input on Guidance Defining Nonindustrial Private Forest Land Eligibility](#) | NRCS

Management / Leadership / Governance

- [Nonprofit Boards: 7 Key Responsibilities for Good Governance](#) | Wild Apricot Blog
- [In-Person Public Meetings Put on Hold for Now](#) | MRSC *AND* [Payroll Administration](#) | MRSC
- [How to Lead When Your Team Is Exhausted — and You Are, Too](#) | HBR

Soil

- [If Ranching Wants To Survive Drought And Other Climate Hassles, It's Time To Show Soil Some Love](#) | Colorado Public Radio

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