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Washington Association of Conservation Districts

Five Things to Know

January 21, 2021

1. Last call for WACD scholarships to NACD conference

We are expanding eligibility for the WACD scholarship to NACD and extending the deadline. The expansion moves from one supervisor per district to the first 45 supervisors and/or employees who express interest.

We've had relatively little uptake of our offer to send one conservation district supervisor from each district to the annual meeting of the National Association of Conservation Districts. It's important for Washington State to be well represented at this national meeting, if only because Benton CD supervisor Michael Crowder will become our new national president for NACD.

But it is more than that, of course. Because the conference is being held virtually, and because the cost is so low, this is a perfect year to get to know the people and programs available through NACD. We may never again see an opportunity like this. It is a "perfect storm" that dramatically increases access and reduces cost.

The extended deadline is next Wednesday, January 27th by 4 pm. Contact [Ryan Baye](#) before then to receive this WACD benefit. For more information about the NACD annual conference, visit NACD's conference website (<https://events.bizzabo.com/NACD/home>).

Potential conference highlights include: a presentation in part by **Laura Johnson** on district communications; a session hosted by **Pierce CD** on two of their projects (Floodplains by Design and a new carbon credit program); and the inauguration of NACD President-Elect **Michael Crowder**.

2. Special committees

Resolutions 2020-05 and 2020-06 call for a committee to be formed about diversity, equity, and inclusion. On Monday, the WACD Board of Directors discussed criteria for filling a DEI group to ensure representation from all area associations and to include people with diverse backgrounds. Stay tuned for an announcement from WACD President Jeanette Dorner as we get this effort off the ground.

In December, the Conservation Commission passed a motion calling for a joint committee appointed by the Commission and by WACD about conservation district elections. This topic was discussed today at the Commission's January meeting. Resolution 2020-10 also addressed this need. Again, please stay tuned for more information.

3. February 8-12 is WACD Legislative Week

In years past, conservation districts braved the snow and traffic to come to Olympia for a Legislative Day. This year, as we adjust to a virtual legislative session, **WACD is declaring February 8-12 WACD Legislative Week.**

We are asking for districts that plan on meeting with their legislators during session to aim for that week as we convey a virtual message of voluntary, incentive-based conservation. As in previous years, WACD is ready to assist in scheduling appointments. Please contact Ryan Baye rbye@wadistricts.org if that is of interest to you.

In the next few weeks, WACD will provide some handouts that districts can share with legislators to supplement your local district priorities around the biennium budget and highlighting the benefits of CD programs that receive state funding.

4. WACD PMC sales are ahead of 2019 at this time

As of 1/20/21, the PMC has posted \$957,520 in sales for the 2020-21 season, which is an \$11,152 increase from last week. Unfortunately, we do not have sales figures for January 2020, but sales last year on 2/11/20 were \$1,088,209. It remains to be seen if enough additional sales can come in by 2/11/21 to catch up to where we were last year but it is certainly possible. Sales on 1/8/19 were \$873,000 so we are ahead of 2019 so far.

5. Coming up

A few notable events/meetings are just around the corner!

- January 21 webinar: [Contagious Culture, Contagious YOU](#). Sponsored by NCDEA. Use "National Conservation District Employees Association" as your organization when registering. *"Your success and influence as a professional depend upon your ability to relate to others, to create impact with your clients and team, and in being an inspiring authentic human to be with. It's the quality of your presence that ultimately determines your ability to succeed -- your presence is your impact, and for good or bad, you are contagious."*
- January 27 deadline: Contact Ryan for WACD scholarships to the NACD annual meeting.
- February 1-10 meeting: [NACD 75th Annual Meeting](#)
- February 8 meeting: [SoilCon: Washington Soil Health Week](#)
- February 8-12: WACD Legislative Week (stay tuned for more information)

Executive Corner

Dear weblinx,

Thank you to those who took the time to complete our survey about this 5 Things newsletter. The overall result was that you value the 5 Things newsletter. Next week we'll share the final results with you. In the meantime, though, your helpful responses are already leading to changes in the newsletter.

The reading list is moving

The list of links we are reading has been moved to a third-party service called Raindrop.io. (Learn more about Raindrop.io at <https://raindrop.io/> and access our reading list at <https://raindrop.io/collection/15979489>.)

This change serves several purposes. First, it makes the newsletter shorter as several people have requested. Second, it is a quicker, easier system for WACD staff to use. And third, it provides more choice to our subscribers (translation: if you want to see the list, click the link).

A separate website for members/partners is in process

In keeping with the themes of reducing the newsletter size and giving you more choice over what you see, we are exploring the concept of a website for our WACD members and partners. Currently, our website at <https://wadistricts.org> presents content intended for the general public and content of

more use to our members and partners. One result of this approach is a more confusing website with messages that are sometimes less clear than they could be.

Separating that content into two parts -- public-facing content and community-focused content -- is the idea we are starting to develop. What that means is that much of the content that has been in the 5 Things newsletter would instead be posted to the members/partners site. We would include links in the newsletter to the most important and interesting posts (and maybe include a brief excerpt from time to time) but the full content of those posts would not be in the newsletter.

What exactly would not be included in the 5 Things newsletter?

- Executive Corner
- PMC report
- Executive Office report
- Links to what we are reading

Each of those pieces would become available at the members/partners site, with a link to that content in the 5 Things newsletter. That will make the 5 Things newsletter much shorter. If you want to see specific content, it will be easily available with a tap or mouse click.

There are other advantages to a separate site where content is organized by topic. If you are interested in just one particular topic, you'll be able to see the history of articles on that topic with just a mouse click or two. The advantage for us is that we can better cover the wide range of interests present in our conservation district community without burdening folks who aren't interested in all topics.

The existing public-facing website was designed to be attractive with big fonts and lots of images. It has become bloated, though, as we've layered on more tools to aid in presenting member-focused information to you. That makes the public-facing website slower and makes it harder to manage. The members/partners site will be much more utilitarian in character because one message from the 5 Things survey was clear: get to the point! We can do that!

The members/partners website is a spare-time project which, as you might imagine, is difficult to move forward during this legislative season. Nevertheless, we'll move forward as quickly as we can in the interest of serving you better.

Thank you,

Tom Salzer, Executive Director
exec@wadistricts.org
 (360) 999-5151 X101

More from the WACD Plant Materials Center

COVID-19 Update – Everyone continues to remain COVID-free. There was one person on the crew that reported cold-like symptoms, got tested for COVID, and spent two days off awaiting results which came back negative. It turns out that he had a cold. Skagit County reported 24 new cases yesterday.

Sales – As of 1/20/21, the PMC has posted \$957,520 in sales for the 2020-21 season, which is an \$11,152 increase from last week. Unfortunately, we do not have sales figures for January 2020, but sales last year on 2/11/20 were \$1,088,209. It remains to be seen if enough additional sales can come in by 2/11/21 to catch up to where we were last year but it is certainly possible. Sales on 1/8/19 were \$873,000 so we are ahead of 2019 so far.

Harvest and Shipping Continues – As mentioned last week, the harvest is continuing on schedule but shipping is slower than usual. As of 1/21/21 850,000 plants have been harvested and only 290,000 have been shipped. That is an increase of 90,000 plants harvested since last week and 40,000 more

shipped, which means 50,000 more plants in an increasingly full cooler. Side note, the first refrigerated trailer arrived Monday and is almost half full as well.

Deconstructing a Seedling – PMC customers throughout the northwest and beyond are receiving large and small quantities of a variety of bare root seedlings to plant out or pot up. It is probably worthwhile to take a minute to review what went into producing some of these, particularly a 2-year-old conifer seedling (see photo).

- **Ground Prep** – After a field is harvested it is time to get ready to bring it back into production. Chicken manure is liberally applied and worked in. That is followed by planting a barley cover crop which is grown, mowed, and incorporated into the soil. The soil is fumigated to eliminate as many weed seeds and soil-borne pathogens as possible.
- **Seed Acquisition** – Before or during the ground prep phase, the species, quantities, and provenance of what needs to be grown are determined. For a 2-0 conifer that means these decisions must be made three years before being sold. That is tricky since most of the PMC's production is speculative. Once those decisions are made, requests for seed are sent out to the appropriate collectors and vendors. Hopefully, they can come close.
- **Propagation and Planting** – All but one species grown here come from seeds that are dormant. They need some form of pretreatment to break that seed dormancy to get them to germinate. After that, the seed is planted using a seed drill, followed by waiting to see little germinants emerge.
- **Production** – A 2-year-old seedling is in production for two growing seasons. The first year they need irrigation, and weed and pest control. In the second growing season, they also receive root culturing treatments to enhance root development. This typically involves root pruning. A root pruner, or undercutter, is an implement that has a reciprocating blade that goes into the ground at a depth sufficient to cut off the root tips without cutting off too much root. Removing the root tips causes the roots to produce more fine lateral roots which are primarily responsible for uptake of nutrients and moisture, creating a more survivable and vigorous seedling.
- **Sales and Marketing** – None of the stock grown here is of any value until they find a home. Field inventories are conducted to determine what is available to sell which is sent out to current past and prospective customers. As orders come in, they are entered and deducted from inventory.
- **Harvest** – Bare root seedlings can only be harvested when they are dormant. That means December through March. A seasonal harvest crew of 20 people is hired with 14 people in the packing shed and 6 outside lifting. The plants are lifted out of the ground using an implement called a lifter. It has a large blade that is pulled through the ground and breaks the root system free from the soil. It also has a set of reciprocating fingers that moves the seedlings up to the surface where they are placed in field totes and brought into to packing shed. There they are sorted, graded, bundled, bagged, and placed in a cooler to remain dormant while they await transport to their forever homes.

It takes time and a lot of steps to produce a seedling. That is just the beginning though. End users of these plants must contend with their own ground prep, weed and pest control, possibly moisture and nutrient management, and a lot of time before they become established and mature. Those involved in PMC operations appreciate all of those who undertake these challenges to get plants to grow and add to our world. Thanks for all you do. We're all in this together!

Life Goes On – The days are getting longer and it appears that the Red Flowering Currant around here is starting to bloom. Could it be that Spring is nearing? Oh wait, it is the middle of January. Never mind!



More from the WACD Executive Office

Reminder: we have new phone numbers! – The Olympia office has a new main phone number: (360) 999-5151. Ryan is at extension 100 and Tom is at extension 101.

NE and SE Area Directors – Ryan attended four NE area meetings last week and will be attending the fifth meeting next week. He also looks forward to attending SE area board meetings in February to promote the area director vacancy.

Systems? – Last week, we mentioned that we would be evaluating an association management system (AMS). Ryan and I did that on Tuesday. The system is relatively simple and would be a powerful tool for us. However, it would require that every member have an account. We don't think our members are quite ready to do that so we are going to pass on the AMS at this time.

Links to what we are reading

Responses to the recent survey about this 5 Things newsletter revealed that some folks would like more brevity...but other folks also wanted to keep the same newsletter content. To satisfy both groups, we are moving the WACD Reading List to an outside service at Raindrop.io.

View the current WACD Reading List at <https://raindrop.io/collection/15979489>.

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