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Washington Association of Conservation Districts

5 Things to Know for January 6, 2022

Legislative Alert

Three pieces of legislation are of immediate interest to our members:

- [House Bill 1631, an act relating to supporting Washington's food production system by providing technical assistance in support of improved voluntary environmental stewardship](#). The first **hearing will be held on Tuesday, January 11, at 10:00 am** in the House Rural Development, Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee. **WACD supports HB 1631 and will sign in PRO.**
- [House Bill 1652, an act relating to conservation district elections](#), comes up for **hearing next Wednesday, January 12, at 8:00 am** in the [House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations](#). HB 1652 is the bill that incorporates the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Elections. **WACD supports HB 1652. We will need conservation districts to sign in PRO on this bill to demonstrate widespread support by our community.**
- [Senate Bill 5665, an act relating to protecting, restoring, and maintaining habitat for salmon recovery](#), presents a regulatory approach to riparian restoration and maintenance. **WACD is neutral on SB 5665 at this time.**

For more information, including guidance on how to submit testimony or to testify on a bill, please [review our post on these three bills](#).

Dear weblinx,

Welcome to 2022! This is our first **5 Things** newsletter of the new year.

I am saddened to report that long-time Grant Conservation District manager **Marie Lotz passed away on December 25**. If you've followed the Grant CD for a while, you know they have gone through huge changes over the years. Marie was a key player in the Grant CD's successes since 1999. Lovely remembrances are available [here](#) on the Tribute Archive website and [here](#) on the Grant CD's Facebook page. Marie will be deeply missed. Our condolences go out to her family and to the many people in our conservation community who knew her.

The next **legislative session convenes on Monday, January 10**. After the WACD annual conference and business meeting, our focus quickly shifts to legislative and state budget matters.

We know from pre-filed bills that some significant issues and opportunities will intersect with the interests of many of our members and partners. As we get started with this session, **we'll put legislative information in the 5 Things** — at least for a few weeks! — and then shift to

conveying that information in a legislatively-focused newsletter that Ryan Baye will curate.

In lighter news, we have drawn the **winners of two \$25 gift cards** from the pool of annual conference surveys. The winners are (drumroll, please): **Alan Chapman** (Whatcom CD) and **Wade Troutman** (Foster Creek CD)! Congratulations to Alan and Wade, and thank you to all who helped us by providing feedback.

1. The next Legislature convenes on Monday, January 10

This will be a short session from January 10 to March 10. Some legislation will be proposed that directly affects conservation districts or their customers. Since some bills will touch our members, you can expect some calls to action about legislation to support or to not support.

WACD has contracted with Ceiba Consulting, headed by Brynn Brady. Brynn will again be our lobbyist for the 2022 session.

Both the [House and the Senate have decided to proceed virtually](#) again this year. That means no in-person visits to the Hill.

2. Legislative Briefing and Legislative Week

WACD will hold a legislative briefing on Friday, January 14 for interested members and partners. Zoom connection information will be sent out in a Legislative Alert email in the next few days.

This year, Legislative Week (translation: coordinated virtual visits with legislators) will be held from January 24 through 28. This week was selected because it comes before the cutoff date for policy bills. We believe this time period will be the most effective in conveying key messages from conservation districts to legislators. Please contact Ryan Baye at rbaye@wadistricts.org for more information.

3. Governor's salmon recovery proposals for 2022

During Christmas week, Governor Inslee announced his [salmon recovery proposals for 2022](#). You may have also seen an [article in the Capital Press](#) that identified a mandatory-width buffer approach in the Governor's proposals.

Since then, Senator Rolfes has pre-filed [Senate Bill 5665](#) as discussed above in the Legislative Alerts section. At this time, no committee hearing has been scheduled for SB 5665. WACD expects that the parameters included in SB 5665 will create a substantial amount of feedback and concern among many of our members and those served by our members. Until we get more information, we encourage our members to not weigh in on SB 5665 quite yet.

4. Area Director vacancies in the South Central and Southeast areas

WACD is assisting the South Central and Southeast Area Associations in filling vacant Area Director positions. Area Directors also serve on WACD's Board of Directors, acting as decision-makers on behalf of the Association in-between annual business meetings. WACD has contacted both areas and will be attending local district meetings in January and February. The goal is to fill the vacancies by mid-February.

5. Coming up

- January 10 – Legislature convenes.
- January 12 – Building Better session on annual and long-range planning.
- January 14 - Joint legislative briefing for WACD members.

- January 17 – WACD Board of Directors work session.
- January 20 – WSCC business meeting.



From your Executive Director

Plant Materials Center update

The [PMC update](#) reprises the astounding year we experienced in 2021 and takes a look forward at 2022. The amazing sales performance and record-setting work by PMC staff continue into the New Year!

2022 is the Year of Engagement

As we look at the bills being filed for the 2022 Legislature, it is clear that we'll need to do more outreach. We, in this case, means all of us in our community, not just WACD. Potential changes to conservation district elections give us the opportunity to support the good work of the Joint Committee on Elections. A state government focus on regulating riparian buffers presents the opportunity to explain the effectiveness of our voluntary, incentive-based approach to conservation. Other bills and budget items are likely to generate some interesting energy, both within our conservation district community and with partners.

A lesson I learned long ago from one of our non-governmental partners was that issues create opportunities to expand our reach. As we talk with others about the things that are most important to us, we also learn what is important to our existing and potential partners. I hope that in 2022, you will be able to reach people you've not been able to reach before!

Reflection

Your WACD Executive Office staff have been gearing up for the 2022 Legislature that convenes on Monday, January 10th. This will be another challenging session and not only because of how the Legislature will operate under COVID-19 protocols. This time, we expect to see at least one bill on conservation district elections plus legislation about mandatory riparian buffer widths.

The conservation district elections legislation will be tracked closely by Washington State Conservation Commission staff and by WACD. Because of the good work of the Joint Committee on Elections last year, this year WSCC and WACD can leverage the good work of the Committee by presenting a united front on conservation district election reform.

Regarding mandatory riparian buffer widths, WACD will probably be focusing on the effectiveness of voluntary implementation. There seems to be an undercurrent in some agencies that voluntary conservation doesn't really work. I have a feeling that we'll see this come up as more regulatory approaches are proposed. We're already seeing an increase in

Administrative Orders issued by the Department of Ecology in some areas. A few districts report that Ecology staff are acting as if the Livestock Riparian Water Policy has already been changed. These are just a few indicators of what may be an increasing focus on regulation as a way to protect water, habitats, and species.

What I'm leading up to is this: we will be facing some unique opportunities to educate legislators (new and experienced) on the value of our voluntary, incentive-based conservation delivery system. This is a significant moment that may well affect the future of conservation districts and how they are able to deliver services to constituents. WACD will be asking for your help as some issues crystallize during the 2022 legislative session.

Weekly thoughts

As I think about our many wonderful differences and the huge hearts that drive so many in our community, these quotations come to mind.

"What divides us pales in comparison to what unites us." – Edward Kennedy

"The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do."
– Steve Jobs

Yours in conservation,

Tom Salzer, Executive Director

exec@wadistricts.org

(360) 999-5151 X101

Recent Posts on the Hub

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- [Governor releases 2022 proposed supplemental budget | SCC](#)
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- [West Sound Habitat Restoration Project Manager | Mid Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group](#)

See the full list of Recent Posts at <https://hub.wadistricts.org/posts/>. Also see the articles WACD staff are reading at <https://hub.wadistricts.org/resources/wacd-reading-list/>.

Partners are important!

Find our list of partners at <https://hub.wadistricts.org/wacd/partners-sponsors/partners/>.

- [Friends of NACD](#) – Your contributions provide funding for technical assistance grants to conservation districts.
- [Washington Conservation Society](#) – WCS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization so your contributions are tax-deductible. If you make purchases through Amazon Smile, a portion of your purchases goes to WCS in support of their programs and initiatives.

We appreciate our great sponsors

Many thanks to our generous sponsors for helping us support Washington State's conservation districts. We will be updating our sponsor list in December! Until then, find sponsors on the Conference page: <https://hub.wadistricts.org/annual/2021meetings/conference/#sponsors>



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1219 11th Ave SE, Olympia, WA 98501
(360) 999-5151

