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Washington Association of Conservation Districts

5 Things to Know for February 3, 2022

Dear weblinx,

Today is policy cutoff day at the Legislature. This means *all policy bills that did not make it out of committee are dead*. However, there is an exception: if a bill is necessary to implement the state budget, then it can still be pushed through at a later date. Who defines what is necessary to implement the budget? Whatever a majority of lawmakers says is necessary! The takeaway here is that even "dead" bills can advance, so we must remain vigilant in watching legislation that is important to our member conservation districts.

1. What survived the first legislative cut-off

This session has had a few surprising turns for our conservation district community. We knew a regulatory approach to salmon recovery was in the offing but did not expect it to be a mandatory approach to riparian buffers ([House Bill 1838](#)). Mandating buffers would severely impact the agricultural customers who utilize conservation district services and it does not fit with our deeply held conviction that voluntary, incentive-based conservation is the best approach. Fortunately, it appears that HB 1838 is no longer in play for this session.

We did not expect to have two bills on conservation district elections (House Bill 1652 and House Bill 1910). Yesterday, [Substitute House Bill 1652](#) was passed out of committee so that's the one to watch. This bill includes the four recommendations of the Joint Committee on Elections. Amended into it are provisions for certain financial reporting for conservation district supervisors while still maintaining the opt-in process for district elections under Title 29A. In a few days, you can expect a joint statement from the State Conservation Commission and WACD on what this looks like.

The big opportunity we didn't see coming is the possibility of increasing funding for voluntary conservation programs. WACD voiced that idea during [testimony on House Bill 1838](#) — "*if sufficient funding had been provided for voluntary conservation programs, today there would be no perceived need for this legislation*" — and it found traction among ag commodity groups and legislators. It is possible that we'll see more funding for voluntary conservation in the supplemental budget. WACD is focusing effort on that outcome.

A few other important bills are up for committee vote today. You can find these on [WACD's Legislative Watch List](#). We will report the disposition of those bills by the end of today. And as always, if you want to learn more please consider subscribing to [WACD's Legislative Updates newsletter](#) that comes out every Monday during the legislative session.

2. Legislative strategy and the remainder of the season

What is our legislative strategy at this point in the session? WACD's Director of Legislative and Member Services, Ryan Baye, [explains our approach](#). Up to this point, our communications have been relatively limited, focusing on committee members and the conservation districts

they serve. That changes as we reach policy cutoff today and more legislative eyes see the bills that made it out of the originating committee. Looking ahead, WACD will likely be asking for more conservation districts to weigh in as key pieces of legislation advance.

[WACD's legislative priorities](#) remain the same with one key addition: getting more funding for voluntary conservation programs. If you need a refresher on testifying, check out our [resources for participating in the legislative process](#).

3. Call for Workgroup Volunteers

WACD is responding to a resolution adopted at the 2021 Annual Business Meeting to form a temporary group dedicated to assessing the emerging issue of harmful algae blooms. President Mumford has called for interested CDs and partners willing to participate in this workgroup by March 4th.

Visit our [WACD Hub post on the harmful algal bloom workgroup](#) to learn more about the workgroup, its mandate, the timeline, and who to contact if you're interested,

4. Plant Materials Center

Saying that sales are brisk would be an understatement. They are so brisk there has not been time to generate a new sales report. Last week sales were running 35% ahead of the same time last year. Sales Manager Jacquie Gauthier has been keeping quite busy fielding inquiries, posting orders, arranging for pickups and shipping, and making last-minute changes to all of the above upon request. [Read more in this week's update](#).

5. WACD Board meeting February 21

The WACD Board of Directors will hold a regular business meeting on Monday, February 21 at 6:00 pm. This meeting will be virtual and the Zoom link will be posted on the Board Meetings page at <https://wadistricts.org/board-of-directors>.

Recent Posts on the Hub

- [A first for Pierce Conservation District](#)
- [Seeking Participants for Harmful Algae Bloom Workgroup](#)
- [Plant Materials Center update: February 2, 2021](#)
- [State legislative report 01/31: First legislative deadline approaching | WAWG](#)
- [Policy & Planning Specialist with RCO](#)
- [House panel endorses voluntary conservation in Washington | capitalpress.com](#)
- [WACD Legislative Strategy & the Remainder of Session](#)
- [Week 3 General Legislative Review](#)
- [Once a Doubter, Adna Property Owner Turns to Conservation and Fish Advocacy | The Daily Chronicle](#)
- [Inslee's mandatory buffer bill failing to move | Rural Life | capitalpress.com](#)

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/>.

From your Executive Director

Seizing unforeseen opportunities

We predicted that during this legislative session, we might have to defend an attack on voluntary conservation and work to shepherd our preferred elections bill through the process. What we didn't expect was the support for voluntary conservation that surfaced while we opposed a regulatory approach to restoring riparian habitat.

Opportunity is on our doorstep. We know that our future must include a significant voluntary conservation component because it is a core value we all share. WACD adopted it as #8 in its ten guiding principles:

We believe in, and uphold, the practice of locally-led, voluntary, incentive-based conservation

I was deeply disappointed in the undercurrents in testimony by some supporters of House Bill 1838. Some of the comments implied that voluntary conservation doesn't work because it hasn't been as successful as people had hoped.

Sadly, the State of Washington has never fully funded the voluntary conservation needs that have been brought forward over and over again by the State Conservation Commission and others. Investment in voluntary conservation programs for riparian habitat has always been insufficient to meet the demonstrated need. This failure of the State to fund conservation is disappointing but it also presents a strong rallying cry for our community.

This is the moment to seek greater support for voluntary conservation programs. You may hear more from WACD on this in the weeks ahead. Meanwhile, please do tell your local legislators that fully funding voluntary conservation is a key to restoring salmon habitat.

Weekly quotation

I hope that at least one of these three quotes resonates with you.

"If a window of opportunity appears, don't pull down the shade." – Tom Peters

"No one ever became a success without taking chances...One must be able to recognize the moment and seize it without delay." – Estée Lauder

"Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago." – Warren Buffett

Yours in conservation,

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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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