



Washington Association of Conservation Districts

5 Things to Know for June 16, 2022

A day late, but...

This edition of the Five Things comes to you slightly delayed. WACD Executive Office staff attended the WADE training conference and came back fulfilled and very tired. We talked about the Five Things content yesterday as we caught up on urgent requests from earlier in the week and today we tie a ribbon around this edition for you.

Dear Thomas,

1 – WADE Conference = Success

More than 200 conservation district professionals, supervisors, and partners participated in this year's WADE training conference. WACD was proud to help support this year's event and we hope all who participated received value from the knowledge, experience, and connections fostered through this amazing event.

2 – WACD Board Meeting June 20th

WACD's Board of Directors will be holding a business meeting on Monday, June 20th at the Plant Materials Center in Bow, WA and online. Among other topics, the Board is scheduled to select a venue for WACD's 2022 Annual Conference, adopt the FY 23-24 annual budget, and approve an annual work plan. Learn more at: <https://wadistricts.org/board-of-directors>.

3 – State Conservationist highlighted by Capital Press

Roylene Comes at Night, our very own NRCS State Conservationist for Washington State, was recently highlighted by the Capital Press with a long, insightful profile. It is a great read that will help you appreciate how lucky we are to have Roylene as our State Conservationist. Learn more at: https://www.capitalpress.com/state/washington/roylene-washington-state-conservationist-helps-connect-farmers-others-to-the-land/article_500655b6-8db8-11ec-8254-63286782e3c5.html

4 – NACD Summer Meeting

Registration for the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) [Summer Conservation Forum and Tours](#) remains open through June 24, 2022! Hosted in partnership with the Puerto Rico Association of Soil Conservation Districts, this summer's meeting will take

place in San Juan, Puerto Rico from July 16-19 at the Caribe Hilton Hotel. More details, including agenda and tour information, can be found [here](#). The deadline for pre-registration discounts is Friday, June 24.

5 – Plant Materials Center update

The PMC is already taking orders for 2023, more than \$500,000 worth! A few species are already sold out, a new plant availability sheet will be ready soon. Spring sowing is complete, and root culturing will begin soon. [Read more...](#)

Summer schedule for the Five Things

Reminder: we are publishing on a "summer schedule" with issues of the Five Things newsletter sent on the first and third Thursday in May, June, July, and August.

Recent Posts on the Hub

- [Marion SWCD \(Oregon\) Seeks Financial Administrator](#)
- [Plant Materials Center update: June 16, 2022](#)
- [Western White Pine, A Tree of the Past for the Future | The Journal of the San Juan Islands](#)
- [Incoming and Outgoing Supervisors](#)
- [Plant Materials Center update: June 2, 2022](#)
- [District Manager, Foster Creek CD](#)
- [Farm Resource Specialist, Pierce CD](#)
- [NACD Forestry Webinar June 10th](#)
- [Office of Farmland Preservation Specialist \(Program Specialist 3\)](#)
- [WACD Seeks Comments on Draft Annual Work Plan](#)

See the full list of Recent Posts at <https://hub.wadistricts.org/posts/>. Many news articles that mention Washington State conservation districts are [shared on Flipboard](#). In the [WACD Reading List](#) we capture many articles of interest to segments of our community.

From your Executive Director

WADE Conference

What a wonderful event this week that was crafted by the Washington Association of Conservation Districts conference team and shepherded by WADE leadership. Before I reflect on it, visit the [WADE page about the conference](#) to learn what kind of content was delivered.

I am biased in my thinking about WADE and I know it. I started my conservation career at a time when there weren't really career tracks for conservation district employees. Many conservation district technicians got trained up by their district and then moved on to work for the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other agencies. Thirty years ago, conservation districts were the entry point for a career with some other organization.

Today, though, is different. Today we actually have careers built within our conservation district community. We have moved from district jobs being a stepping stone to districts providing long-term opportunities to grow and perform as conservation professionals.

Making this transition from entry jobs to careers was part of the vision more than 30 years ago when WADE was created. To see this happen during my career gives me a sense of gratitude and fulfillment. I am grateful that our community is able to attract and retain highly qualified people. I feel fulfilled because I was able to contribute to this outcome in my term as WADE President many years ago. I know how committed WADE members are to helping others succeed.

So yes, I am biased when it comes to WADE. It feels really good to be part of something that builds capacity and delivers results. If you are a WADE member, I think you should feel good about your employee association. It is pretty awesome. If you are a conservation district supervisor or a partner, I hope you feel good, too, about WADE and the growth of professionalism among our conservation district community. WADE's work is worthy of your support.

WADE President

I'd also like to take a moment to thank Bill Blake (Skagit CD), a wonderful WADE President who is now Past President. Bill and I have interacted over the past several years and I have found him to be a great leader who influences positive outcomes. Following Bill is freshly elected WADE President Cindy Pierce (Skagit CD). Thank you, Bill!

I've known Cindy for many years and can attest to the heart and passion she brings to her conservation work. I predict that she will continue the long tradition of delivering a strong training conference and representing WADE on the WACD Board of Directors. Welcome, Cindy!

Is it time for another evolution?

As I muse about the wonderful effectiveness of WADE over the years, I'm reminded of struggles I've observed in other states and many conversations with various leaders. And I'm going to suggest something in a moment that has been in my thoughts for many years...something that I haven't really brought out into the light until now.

There is the concept of right people, right place, right time that basically says: if you don't have those components, your idea is not likely to take root and succeed. I think we have those components now, in the context of this idea.

At the heart of this are a few observations. First, WACD is, in my opinion, a statewide association of conservation districts. It is not an association of conservation district supervisors but of whole, functioning conservation districts made up of governing board members and

employees. It is hard to argue that strong, effective conservation districts are made possible by the professional staff who deliver conservation programs and services every day. They need good boards. And boards need good staff.

Second, WACD would gain great strength and capacity if we included conservation district employees in our work. The job of operating a conservation district has become much more complex over time. The knowledge, skills, and abilities of conservation district employees are not presently incorporated into WACD's governance and that seems like a glaring lack, given the challenges in operating conservation districts.

Third, we seem to be at a point where we realize that every voice deserves to be heard. Every person who helps to make our conservation delivery system work — and work well! — contributes to the overall strength of that system. Those voices deserve to be represented and be participants in the totality we call WACD.

There are already some models in place for this kind of thing. In California, a small number of district managers sit on the CARCD board. In Oregon, a few district employees are on the OACD board (I was one of those). In Wisconsin, the state association of districts and the state employees association actually merged, combining two into one. My contacts in those three states all tell me that including conservation district staff has made their state association better.

The Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WI Land+Water) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit membership organization representing the state's county LCCs and LWCDs. The organization has been in existence since 1953 in various forms. Most recently, in 2012, the organization merged the state organizations of Wisconsin Association of Land Conservation Employees and Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (at that time, the organization representing land conservation committee members) to form the organization we now know as WI Land+Water. This merger reflects the close working relationship of LCC embers and LWCD staff and their common needs for representation. Source: [Land Conservation Committee Handbook 22-24](#)

For Washington State, I don't think a merger makes good sense. WADE is focused on improving the capacity and effectiveness of the people who deliver conservation every day. WACD is focused on protecting the conservation delivery system and gaining the resources that districts need to succeed and grow. The roles of each organization are important and should not be diluted. A merger might cause us to lose focus on important goals.

Instead, consider what the WACD Board would look like if, instead of each area association electing two supervisors as area directors, each area elected one supervisor and one district manager. Rather than having 12 area directors who are also board supervisors, the WACD Board could include six supervisors and six district managers. With the WADE President also serving as a director, that would mean the 19-member WACD Board of [officers](#) and [directors](#) would include seven district managers.

This mechanism would bring additional capacity to the work of WACD, give employees a formal voice in the affairs of WACD, and create a stronger sense of partnership between board supervisors and employees. All of these benefits would improve the conservation delivery system.

I know that including conservation district staff on the WACD Board has been discussed before and that WACD's voting members have previously rejected the idea. However, while yesterday's "no" may reflect the feeling at that time, it might not reflect the feeling today...or tomorrow. I believe we would get great value by including district managers in WACD's work to support conservation districts and the conservation delivery system. The time seems right.

Many of these professionals want a voice and a vote in how WACD functions. To me, this seems like a natural evolution that would benefit our entire community. It feels like we've arrived at a moment where we also have the right people. This concept seems to be ripening in 2022. Is it time to take this step? That is up to you. I hope that you'll give it some thought.

Yours in conservation,

Tom Salzer, Executive Director
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- [*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.

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