



Washington Association of Conservation Districts

5 Things to Know for January 26, 2023

Dear Thomas,

What a week!

WACD's board and staff have been busy this week! The Board of Directors held a regular meeting, Olympia staff made visits to conservation districts, and the Plant Materials Center team has been immersed in harvesting and packing plant orders. When we add in the advocacy and coordination work we do for conservation districts, it has been a busy time.

People are part of natural resource solutions

In an [Executive Corner article I wrote in May 2021](#), I talked about the intersection of natural resource issues and people. This topic recently came up again so I think it's worth pulling a quote out of the archives. The paragraph below is my view, and of course, there are different points of view. My perspective is colored by the reality I experience in which WACD has to work with members, partners, and legislators to advance the ability of conservation districts to get their important work done. Districts can't succeed without people. We can't succeed without people.

Conservation districts don't serve natural resources: they serve people. Conserving natural resources is the mission and people are the pathway to accomplishing that mission. People elect district supervisors. People authorize and pay rates and charges to support some districts. People allow conservation districts to do conservation work on their land. Clearly, our conservation districts are accountable to the people in their communities. Without the interest and support of people, conservation districts would simply be unable to conserve natural resources.

Some of our people say that conservation districts are about natural resources. Yes, they are. Our community members who hold this view are not wrong. A very strong focus on natural resources is made clear in [RCW 89.08](#). That fact is indisputable.

But RCW 89.08 also contains many references to meeting with people, sharing information, and having hearings to help inform the decisions of the conservation district. Interacting with people is sprinkled throughout RCW 89.08.

Districts address natural resource issues through service to people

When I read RCW 89.08, I see language that marries natural resource issues and the people who use/manage/shepherd those resources. Or put another way, if people were not necessary, conservation districts would be charged to directly put conservation practices on the ground without any involvement or support by citizens, elected officials, and landowners. However, that's not how really how the [corporate status and powers of a conservation district](#) are described in RCW 89.08.

People are simply part and parcel of how conservation districts address natural resource issues. It is endemic to the conservation delivery system. Looking back to the Dust Bowl, it was the impacts of excessive erosion on farms and on people that catalyzed the creation of the conservation district system. Was that action about natural resources or about people? It was about both and we need to keep both in mind as we work toward addressing natural resource issues, individually and collectively.

WACD Executive Office staff remain available to field your feedback and questions. Despite this very busy season for us, please do reach out to us at oly@wacd.org and we will get back to you as quickly as we can.

Always yours for conservation,

Tom Salzer, Executive Director

Five Things to Know

1 – Volunteers needed for Shared Resources Work Group

Resolution 2022-08, sponsored by the Clark Conservation District, was adopted at the 2022 WACD annual business meeting. The goal of this resolution is to address the need and opportunity for sharing district resources and services, with a report due to WACD membership by June 30th of this year. You can read the full language on the WACD Hub, where all the active resolutions are available [here](#).

The WACD Board authorized the formation of a temporary work group at its meeting this past Monday. We are looking for volunteers to help with this. If you are interested, please contact Ryan and Tom at oly@wacd.org. (This email address, by the way, is a convenience address that bounces incoming emails to both Ryan's and Tom's inboxes.)

2 – WACD Board adopts legislative priorities

At the January Board of Directors meeting, [WACD's 2023 legislative priorities](#) were adopted. These priorities come from resolutions agreed upon by the membership as well as feedback received after the preliminary priority list was circulated back in November.

Among the policy priorities for this year:

- **Conservation District Elections** - Promoting the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Elections.

- **Salmon Riparian Habitat** - Supporting HB 1215 with the grant funding housed with-in, and decision-making conducted by, the Washington State Conservation Commission.
- **New Enrollment in the Voluntary Stewardship Program** - Supporting SB 5353 as long as current VSP funding is increased so the 27 currently-enrolled counties do not see a decrease in financial support

Among the budget priorities for this year:

- **\$10,000,000 for Conservation Technical Assistance**
- **\$9,800,000 for Natural Resource Investments**
- **\$100,000,000 for a Riparian Grant Program**

3 – HB 1567 on conservation district elections

[House Bill 1567](#) — *Commissioning a study on conservation district election costs under Title 29A RCW* — was filed yesterday. It is a narrowly focused bill that calls for a study to be done on conservation district elections going back 20 years and what the cost would be for all conservation district board members (five per district) to be elected under RCW 29A general election law. There are some problems with the bill, one being that districts are not required to keep election records for 20 years, so the data desired in the bill may not exist. The bill has to move by February 17th to continue forward so there will be a rapid timeline for this legislation.

4 – WACD Legislative Day details

If you need a hotel room for Leg Day, please contact the Ramada Inn directly, identify you are part of WACD Legislative Day, and request the government rate for your room. Please let us know if you are unable to get the government rate. Ramada Inn: [1-360-459-8866](tel:1-360-459-8866)

We will also be providing breakfast and a legislative briefing the day of those coming to Olympia.

- Date: February 8, 2023
- Location: [Ramada Inn, Lacey, WA](#)
- Legislative Breakfast starts at 7:30 am

We will also be offering an online legislative briefing at noon on Friday, February 3rd for those participating remotely or not are unable to be in Olympia early Wednesday morning.

- [WACD Virtual Legislative Briefing Zoom link](#)

5 – Commission Takes Position on HB 1215

At the Conservation Commission's meeting on January 19th, the Commission voted on the desired principles they wish to see included in HB 1215. There are nine principles in total, including the Commission should retain approval authority for any funding criteria for funds within the Commission's purview and that the Commission should have the flexibility to make available to grant recipients a variety of incentive-based options for riparian protection and restoration. You can read the [full list on their website](#).

More things...

- [WACD Legislative Watch List](#)

- [Sign-up for WACD Legislative updates](#) | [See 2023 newsletters](#)
 - [Riparian Taskforce Final Report: Facilitation Process and Recommendations](#) (PDF) on the Office of Financial Management website.
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Recent Posts on the Hub

- [WACD 2023 Legislative Priorities](#)
- [WACD Legislative Day](#)
- [Week 2 General Legislative Review](#)
- [Plant Materials Center update: January 19, 2023](#)
- [WACD Testimony on HB 1215 on Riparian Areas](#)
- [WACD is OTHER on HB 1166](#)

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.

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