



5 Things to Know for February 2, 2023

Dear Thomas,

The changing approach to conservation district elections

At the 2021 WACD annual business meeting, members adopted the recommendations made by the Joint Committee on Elections as WACD's official position. At the 2022 WACD annual business meeting, Resolution [2022-13 was amended and adopted](#), adding a bit more to the JCE's recommendations.

At the 2022 meeting, WACD told attendees that we would be working toward finding a sponsor for a conservation district elections bill that included the JCE recommendations as modified by Resolution 2022-13.

That hasn't happened. Advancing this member-supported position has taken some interesting twists and turns along the way and WACD leadership had to make a very quick strategic decision. Holding true to Resolution 2022-13 while not creating worse conditions for conservation districts was how we balanced this decision.

There were quiet conversations between some key legislators happening as we ramped up to the opening day of the 2023 legislative session. Those continued through at least the first week of the session. It was appearing as if a much gentler compromise bill was in the offing but then the tide turned, at least to some extent. Last week, Representative Gregerson filed House Bill 1567 to study the cost of shifting all five conservation district supervisor positions to the general election ballot. It is now scheduled for a public hearing next Tuesday and is expected to be voted out of committee on Friday the 10th.

With only a few weeks left until the first cutoff date, we have little opportunity to get a sponsor for our bill. Truth be told, taking the position that the recommendations approved by our members are the only acceptable outcomes does not play in favor of conservation districts. We are hearing concerns from some of our friendly-to-conservation legislators about how easily special interests could gain majority positions on conservation district boards. Given the amount of funding being considered for voluntary conservation this year, one leading legislator

has said that the conservation district election system presents too much risk.

We continue to support the recommendations of the JCE and the adopted position in Resolution 2022-13. Those findings form the basis of our talking points with legislators. Even though we aren't pushing a bill, we are pushing the positions adopted by WACD's members.

It's probably harmful to object too strongly to the CD election study bill, HB 1567. It is, after all, "only a study." The results of the study may well be more helpful than some of us imagine, giving data to support our claims of the estimated costs we've discussed before. The danger in mounting an all-out resistance to a study is it might give the impression that our community is unwilling to consider any change. That perception would likely raise questions and concerns that erode trust and confidence in conservation districts.

What we can and will do is express some specific concerns with the bill. One of those concerns is not including other special purpose districts in the study. It seems only fair to take a look at the election methodologies for all special purpose districts that don't elect officials under the Title 29A election system. It would serve the State better by providing a more complete picture of the many types of special purpose districts, that all have irregular funding systems and were created with a specific intent in mind.

WACD Executive Office staff remain available for your feedback and questions. Despite this very busy season for us, please do reach out to us at oljy@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 – WACD Legislative Day is Wednesday, February 8

We will be providing breakfast and a legislative briefing for those coming to Olympia.

- Date: February 8, 2023
- Location: Rainier East Room of [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](#)

Ryan and Tom will be posted in the Pritchard Building cafeteria most of the day Wednesday to assist districts as needed. For those coming to Olympia for the first time, the legislature has [eight paid parking lots](#) for visitors plus a [free shuttle that runs](#)

[through downtown Olympia](#). There will not be a WACD shuttle from the Ramada Inn to the Capitol. And if you haven't been to Olympia since the pandemic, be aware most legislators will not accept paper handouts, so be prepared to email them to the legislators you meet with in advance or afterwards.

2 – CD Elections Study Bill Hearing

The House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations is conducting a public hearing for [HB 1567](#) (CD supervisor election study) next Tuesday at 1:30 PM.

If you are thinking of testifying, we are hoping to coordinate your testimony with WACD's own planned message. This is a crucial moment in time and if districts offer a less-than-unified message it could make the situation more difficult. Please [contact Ryan and Tom](#) to discuss the points you wish to make.

Anyone wishing to testify can sign-up for either in-person or online testimony can sign up via [this link](#), though you will have to manually select the committee hearing and date.

3 – Voluntary Riparian Grant Program Bill Hearing

Another important bill hearing next week is on [HB 1720](#) (Voluntary Riparian Grant Program), the spiritual successor to HB 1215. It is being heard on Tuesday, February 7 in the House Ag. & Natural Resources Committee at 10:30. WACD appreciates the focus on voluntary conservation by the Legislature. After our review of the bill, WACD supports HB 1720's intent and agrees that the Conservation Commission is the right entity to develop and administer a voluntary riparian grant program.

Anyone wishing to testify can sign-up for either in-person or online testimony can sign up via [this link](#), though you will have to manually select the committee hearing and date.

4 – Coming to the Legislature

WACD's own Ryan Baye penned an article titled "[Legislators Don't Have Fangs](#)" that gives voice to his experience in working with legislators. He hopes to set minds at ease for those of us who are intimidated by the idea of talking with legislators. Among his points is this gem:

"Legislators expect you to be nervous and will try to be graceful."

5 – PMC Update for February 2, 2023

Jim Brown, WACD PMC Director of Nursery Operations, provided an update on this year's harvest at the nursery, reporting 1,104,490 plants lifted from the ground by the end of January. Current sales are 14% above the estimated amount for the year with a month of harvest remaining. All of our fingers and toes are crossed that all the equipment and people continue to function smoothly. You can read more of [his update](#) on the WACD Hub.

More things...

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Recent Posts on the Hub

- [Week 4 General Legislative Review](#)
- [Legislators Don't Have Fangs](#)
- [Plant Materials Center update: February 2, 2023](#)
- [Week 3 General Legislative Review](#)
- [WACD 2023 Legislative Priorities](#)
- [Week 2 General Legislative Review](#)

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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