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Washington Association of Conservation Districts

WACD Legislative Update

March 22, 2023

This is WACD's **tenth week** of legislative updates for 2023. Only a month or so remains in this 105-day legislative session. WACD provides weekly updates about legislative activities for the benefit of our member districts.

1. Conservation Commission Day-to-Day

The action taken by the State Conservation Commission to sever its relationship with Chris Pettit surprised everyone. A significant concern for those of us working in the legislative and budget realms is: will this action affect the ability of WACD and the SCC to work effectively with legislators during the remainder of this session?

The answer is: no. We are well equipped to continue the critical conversations needed to move desired legislation and budget asks forward. Legislators continue to have strong confidence in Washington's conservation delivery system. We confirmed this with WACD lobbyist Brynn Brady.

In a few days, we will learn what will be the next step for the Conservation Commission. You may wish to read a [special message](#) from WACD's Executive Director on this situation. That message concludes with these statements:

This is a moment when we can spend energy looking backward or invest energy in looking to the future together. I encourage you to lean forward toward building an even better future for our entire community and the people served.

2. Riparian Buffer Letters to Legislators

WACD suggests that conservation districts write to their legislators to ask for additional assistance in the state budget for riparian restoration work. To that end, WACD has suggested language for a [Riparian Buffer Letter](#) that can serve as a starting point for your own district's letter.

3. Bills Still on Track

Since the last issue of the Legislative Update, we've seen movement on some bills. If a bill is already scheduled for a public hearing and an executive session, it is noted as **moving quickly** in the list below.

- [SHB 1105](#) (*Requiring public agencies to provide notice for public comment that includes the last date by which such public comment must be submitted*) has a public hearing on March 24.
- [HB 1138](#) (*Concerning drought preparedness*) has an executive session on March 23.
- [HB 1181](#) (*Improving the state's response to climate change by updating the state's planning framework*) passed out of the Senate Local Government Committee on March 16 and has a public hearing on March 23 in the Senate Ways & Means Committee.
- [HB 1216](#) (*Concerning clean energy siting*) is scheduled for executive session action on March 24.
- [HB 1322](#) (*Concerning the Walla Walla water 2050 plan*) has an executive session on March 23.
- [HB 1500](#) (*Increasing the cap on gross sales for cottage food operations*) moved to the Rules Committee and has been placed on second reading.
- [HB 1541](#) (*Establishing the nothing about us without us act*) has an executive session on March 24.
- [HB 1578](#) (*Improving community preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience to wildland fire health and safety impacts in areas of increasing population density, including in the wildland urban interface*) is new to the list this week. Before this, we did not find any funding for conservation district activities in HB 1578. However, the keen eyes of Josh Giuntoli (SCC) spotted this language in the fiscal note: "\$693,800 annually for Conservation District Community Response: Pass through to the Washington State Conservation Commission for coordination with Conservation Districts. To increase actions taken by homeowners and landowners on their property to be prepared for the next wildfire." HB 1578 had a public hearing on March 20.
- [SB 5104](#) (*Surveying Puget Sound marine shoreline habitat*) has a March 23 executive session scheduled.
- [SB 5268](#) (*Addressing equity and efficiencies in public works procurement including modifying small works roster requirements*) passed out of the House Committee on Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans on March 17 and has been referred to Appropriations.
- [SB 5341](#) (*Creating a location-based promotion program for Washington food and agricultural products*) passed out of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources on March 17 and is also referred to Appropriations.
- [SB 5353](#) (*Concerning the voluntary stewardship program*) had a public hearing on March 15 and executive session action was taken on March 21.

4. Legislative Overview

WACD lobbyist Brynn Brady noted there is about a month left in this legislation session. Last week, committees were busy hearing bills from the opposite chamber. Bills must now move forward in the opposite chamber, progressing through policy and fiscal

committees on their way to the floor.

However, a major focus this week is budgets. The Senate released their proposed Capital budget on Monday and it includes all of the programs requested by the Conservation Commission. The Senate operating budget will be released on March 23, heard on Friday, and voted in committee on Monday, March 27.

The House budgets will be released, heard in committee, and voted on during the week of March 27. At that point, budgets go to conference to work out differences. This is when WACD will be asking conservation districts to send letters of support to legislators.

You can [read her full review on the WACD Hub website](#).

5. Looking Ahead

Upcoming cutoff dates are listed below. At this point the bills that will be considered are fairly well known, but that doesn't mean the Legislature slows down!

- March 29 – Policy committee cutoff – opposite house
- April 4 – Fiscal committee cutoff – opposite house
- April 12 – Floor cutoff – opposite house
- April 23 – Sine Die



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