



# Washington Association of Conservation Districts

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## Five Things to Know for February 1, 2024

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## 1 – Legislative Day Recap

**Legislative Day was January 25th** - Thirty-one participants met at the Holiday Inn Express in Lacey, Washington at 7:00 am for breakfast together. They heard from WACD about legislative priorities and had a great discussion with Conservation Commission staff.



Each person attending Legislative Day received a lapel pin as shown below. Note that the pin does not indicate whether the wearer is with the State Conservation Commission, a conservation district, NRCS, or WACD. We wanted something that suggests solidarity among the Conservation Partnership in Washington State and a relatively plain lapel pin featuring the Conservation "C" seemed like just the ticket.



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## 2 – Legislation moving

**Four weeks down and five to go!**

Monday, February 5, 2024 is a key date. From the [cutoff calendar](#):

*Last day to read in committee reports (pass bills out of committee and read them into the record on the floor) from House fiscal committees and Senate Ways & Means and Transportation committees in house of origin.*

After that, Tuesday, February 13, 2024 is the last day to consider (pass) bills in the house of origin.

From [WACD's Bill Tracker](#), here are some bills we're tracking this week:

- January 29th: SB 6281 [Investing in reforestation efforts following landscape-scale forest disturbances](#). (Scheduled for executive session in the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks at 1:30 PM)
- January 31st: HB 1574 - [Supporting Washington agriculture by capturing methane and reducing greenhouse gas emissions](#). (Scheduled for executive session in the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources at 8:00 AM)
- January 31st: HB 1971 [Concerning a rangeland fire protection association pilot project](#). (Scheduled for executive session in the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources at 8:00 AM)
- February 2nd: SB 5667 [Concerning eligibility, enrollment, and compensation of small forestland owners volunteering for participation in the forestry riparian easement](#)

[program](#). (Scheduled for executive session in the Senate Committee on Ways & Means at 1:30 PM)

WACD's Director of Legislative and Member Services, Ryan Baye, covers these and more in his [Legislative Updates newsletter](#) ([click here to subscribe](#)). For a "front door" to advocacy topics, [visit our Advocacy 2024 page](#).

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### 3 – Comment Period is Now Open for the WSRRIS

Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative Strategy (WSRRIS) draft is now open for public comment. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC), and Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced the release of the draft [Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative \(WSRRI\) Long-term Strategy](#).

Following historic wildfires in 2020 that burned over 600,000 acres of shrubsteppe habitat in the state, the Washington Legislature directed WDFW, SCC, and DNR to take immediate action to address the impacts of the fires and provided funding to restore shrubsteppe habitat, support at-risk shrubsteppe wildlife species, and support working lands that are vital for maintaining these habitats and species. The Legislature also directed the agencies to collaboratively produce a long-term strategy for proactively addressing threats facing this landscape.

The draft WSRRI Strategy is now available to review online or at select WDFW regional offices and DNR field offices. Comments can be submitted online at [www.publicinput.com/wssrstrategy](http://www.publicinput.com/wssrstrategy), by email at [shrubsteppestrategy@publicinput.com](mailto:shrubsteppestrategy@publicinput.com), or by phone at 855-925-2801, project number 1838.

Comments are being accepted through Feb. 21, 2024.

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### 4 – NRCS-Washington Seeking your Feedback on CSP

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, at the national level, is conducting an agency-wide Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Process Improvement Effort, with the goal of making the program easier to administer and even more beneficial for their customers. They conducted an internal survey of NRCS employees and an external survey for those who have applied for the program.

Roylene Comes At Night, the NRCS-Washington State Conservationist, wants to hear from all Washington-based producers regardless of whether they've applied for the program or not. They are asking all producers familiar with the program to please fill out [this short survey](#) by Feb. 9, 2024. The responses will be compiled and forwarded onto the CSP Process Improvement Team for consideration.

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## 5 – New District Directory Available

WACD has a new updated directory available on the Hub. The directory contains contact information for conservation districts and our partners. The directory can be accessed [here](#). If you have updates please send them to us at [oly@wacd.org](mailto:oly@wacd.org).

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## 6 – Bonus: From last week: Local Working Groups

[NRCS has a web page](#) that details ten local working group meetings happening in February, March, and April:

- **Big Bend Local Working Group:** Feb. 13, 2024 from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
  - **North Central Local Working Group:** Feb. 21, 2024 from 4 to 7 p.m.
  - **Northeast Local Working Group:** April 4, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.
  - **Northwest Local Working Group:** March 4, 2024; April 1, 2024; and May 6, 2024 (*optional*)
  - **Palouse Local Working Group:** April 2, 2024
  - **Puget Sound Working Group:** Feb. 21, 2024 (*Specific time to be determined*)
  - **Snake River Local Working Group:** Feb. 14, 2024 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
  - **South Central Local Working Group:** March 12, 2024 9 a.m. to noon
  - **Southwest Local Working Group:** Feb. 22, 2024, from 10 a.m. to noon
  - **West Palouse Working Group:** Feb. 21, 9 a.m. to noon
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## Upcoming Events

### 2024

- **January 31 (yesterday):** Legislature – Last day to pass bills out of committee in the house of origin
- **February 5:** Legislature – Last day to pass bills out of House fiscal and Senate fiscal/transportation committees
- **February 5:** [Sustainable Farms and Fields: Funding Q&A Webinar](#)
- **February 8:** [SoilCon: Diversified Organic \(Puyallup\)](#)
- **February 10-14:** [NACD 78th annual meeting – San Diego, California](#)
- **February 13:** Legislature – Last day to pass bills in house of origin
- **February 13:** [SoilCon: Irrigated Perennials \(Prosser\)](#)
- **February 15:** [SoilCon: NW Washington Annuals \(Mount Vernon\)](#)

- **February 20:** [SoilCon: Dryland \(Davenport\)](#)
  - **February 21:** Legislature – Last day to read in bills from committees in opposite house, except fiscal and transportation bills
  - **February 26:** Legislature – Last day to read in bills from fiscal and transportation bills in opposite house
  - **March 1:** Legislature – Last day to consider (pass) opposite house bills (5 p.m.) (except initiatives and alternatives to initiatives, budgets and matters necessary to implement budgets, differences between the houses, and matters incident to the interim and closing of the session).
  - **March 7:** Legislature – Last day allowed for regular session under state constitution
  - **March 19-21:** Statewide CREP training by FSA (Spokane)
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## Resources

Check out these resources:

- Correspondence in the [January 2024 Box.com folder](#) and a couple of new items in the [February 2024 Box.com folder!](#)
  - Bookmarks in the [WACD Reading List](#).
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## Executive Corner

### Legislative Day – thank you to all

I sent a brief thank you note to all 31 participants in the 2024 Legislative Day event. If you know someone who participated, please do express your appreciation for their work. They invested time, money, and energy to come to Olympia in support of local conservation. Their work supported all conservation districts. They were noticed all over the Capitol Campus. Feedback after Legislative Day has been very positive. This event made a difference!

### Safety

Safety has been on my mind, as evidenced by my comments in this column a few weeks ago. Sadly, I share with you the [accidental passing of a WDFW employee](#) who was (I'm guessing) working alone on a turbulent river coming off the Olympia Mountains. ([The Seattle Times](#) later picked up this story.) I hope you will take this to heart by reviewing your own safety protocols for people working in and around water. Every person is needed and every life is precious.

The loss of the WDFW technician hits pretty close to home for me as I took flow measurements on transects across the [Sanpoil River](#) for more than a year, working alone in water that was sometimes so swift I could barely stay standing. More than once I slipped and my hip waders

filled with water. I'm wiser now and wouldn't do this without a partner and a life jacket!

The other safety topic that is beginning to weigh on my mind is the rise of artificial intelligence and how it might be used by bad actors to impersonate you. Phishing emails have become much more sophisticated in recent years and AI is bound to make it even harder to detect bad actors trying to do nefarious things. Last week was Data Privacy Week, says WaTech: <https://watech.wa.gov/watech/news/2024/data-privacy-week-2024>. Scroll down this page to find ways to help keep yourself safe online: <https://staysafeonline.org/programs/data-privacy-week/>.

If you haven't heard of catfishing, [CNN just posted an article about it](#). You might think it doesn't concern you, but when you think about it, your effectiveness rests on the quality of your reputation. Catfishing can harm your reputation. The article also mentions "the explosion of AI technology" in the creation of realistic fake images.

## NACD annual meeting begins February 10

I'll be climbing aboard an airplane on February 9 for the NACD annual meeting in San Diego. Hopefully, the flooding that city has been experiencing from a recent Pineapple Express (atmospheric river) will have abated by then. Also, hopefully, the 737-900 scheduled to carry me to San Diego will have been properly inspected!

While there, I will be meeting with the Association of Conservation Executive Directors where I am privileged to have another term representing the Pacific Region on the ACED board.

We'll have a good contingent of folks representing Washington State at NACD this year. It's hard to believe it was only a year ago that NACD restructured their committees, so this year we'll see the fruits of that change.

## Reach out

As always, we look forward to your ideas and questions. Please reach out to us at [oly@wacd.org](mailto:oly@wacd.org). This is a group address for Heather, Ryan, and Tom, so your message will probably get through!

Always yours for conservation,



Tom Saper  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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## Latest Posts on the Hub

- [Plan to pipe Sequim's original irrigation ditch draws ire of shareholders, neighbors | Sequim Gazette](#)

- [Okanogan CD is Hiring a Communications and Technician Intern](#)
- [There is a King County election happening — but online only.](#)
- [Clark Conservation District to Start Accepting RCPP Poop Smart Clark Applications](#)
- [January 22 - 26 General Legislative Review](#)
- [King Conservation District Board of Supervisors election opens January 23](#)

See the full list of Recent Posts at <https://wadistricts.us/posts/>. The Jobs list is available at <https://wadistricts.us/jobs/>. A wide range of content is available in the [WACD Reading List](#).

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