



Washington Association of Conservation Districts

Five Things to Know for March 7, 2024

Sine Die Edition

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1 – \$3.5 Million in Conservation Technical Assistance

The compromise operating and capital budgets were revealed Wednesday and WACD is more than satisfied with the outcome.

Included in the FY25 operating budget is an additional **\$3.5 million for Conservation Technical Assistance** as well as funding for **two additional FTEs** at the Commission and **\$500,000 in fire recovery funding** for Klickitat County conservation districts. If the Commission chooses at their May meeting to divide the technical assistance money equally for all districts, that would see each district receive an additional \$77,777.78 on July 1st.

While the budget does not include everything WACD was seeking this session, it is a win for a short session. A more comprehensive breakdown is expected to be released by Commission staff. Ryan will be diving into the details of other agency budgets and will be searching for any surprise legislative provisos in the coming days once the budgets are actually voted on. It is unlikely, but possible, for the budget bills to be adjusted before the legislature adjourns today.

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

2 – Working Lands Climate Corps Proposals ~ Deadline Extended

NACD is working alongside the USDA, AmeriCorps, and The Corps Network to implement the Working Lands Climate Corps (WLCC). A program of the American Climate Corps, the WLCC will engage at least 100 young adults in technical skills and climate work across the country.

The Corps Network is providing subgrants to organizations to host WLCC members across the country. **Conservation districts have the opportunity to apply to host one or several WLCC members!**

These WLCC members can provide outreach and education around climate-smart agriculture assistance to farmers, ranchers, and communities. WLCC host organizations will work with state and county-level NRCS staff to facilitate conservation and climate resilience projects, track WLCC member activities, and train members for careers in Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry. Learn more and see the RFP [here](#).

The deadline to submit a proposal has been extended! Submissions are now being accepted until 5:00 p.m. ET on Friday, **March 22, 2024**.

To learn more, visit the [WLCC webpage](#), read the [FAQs](#), or [watch the recording](#) of a recent informational webinar held on the opportunity.

3 – WSCC All CDs Meeting ~ March 26 - 27

The Washington State Conservation Commission will be hosting an **All CDs Meeting** on Tuesday, March 26, and Wednesday, March 27, at the Yakima Convention Center.

This meeting will provide conservation districts and SCC staff the opportunity to work together on SCC's strategic planning process. Attendees will assess current and potential priorities and how they might be supported in a future-focused 2025-2027 biennial budget request. This will bring the conservation community together on day one of the SCC's fiscal development process.

SCC is providing up to \$1,000 in reimbursement per district to attend in-person. Supervisors and staff are encouraged to attend. To register click [here](#).

If you have any questions about this meeting please reach out to Sarah Groth at sgroth@scc.wa.gov or Shana Joy at sjoy@scc.wa.gov.

4 – Plant Materials Center: Update and Plants Available

The WACD Plant Materials Center reached an annual milestone on March 6 when harvest was completed. Shipping will continue for almost two more months.

Sales volume is still down compared to this time last year. The decrease in sales also means a decrease in revenue. Expenses are up compared to last year.

Check out the [current availability](#) list to see items you might need! The cooler is on through the month of April. If you have questions please reach out to [Jacquie Gauthier](#), PMC Sales Manager.

Just a reminder, the PMC accept orders year around and it is never too early to order for next season. Please [contact the PMC](#) if you are interested in having them contract grow particular items.

The Plant Materials Survey below in item 5 will help WACD to better understand what conservation districts need. Once we know that, we can work toward supplying those needs.

Thank you for your support!

5 – Plant Materials Questionnaire ~ Due March 15th

WACD's Plant Materials Task Force is hard at work looking at ways to increase the availability of native plants for Conservation Districts (CDs). An important step in the process is to determine current and future CD plant needs.

A questionnaire was emailed to CD Managers/Executive Directors and Chairs **last week**. If your CD did not receive the link please reach out to Heather Wendt at hwendt@wadistricts.org. The Task Force would like one survey completed per District so please work with your staff to complete the survey.

Thank you from WACD's Plant Materials Task Force!

Upcoming Events

2024

- **March 7:** Legislature – Last day allowed for regular session under state constitution

- **March 14:** [AFT training on Facilitating Peer to Peer Education With Women and Historically Underserved Producers](#)
 - **March 18:** [WACD Board of Directors meeting](#)
 - **March 19-21:** [Statewide CREP training](#) by FSA (Spokane)
 - **March 20-21:** [SCC tour, dinner, and meeting](#) (Shelton)
 - **March 26-27:** SCC All Districts Meeting (Yakima)
 - **April 15:** [WACD Board of Directors meeting](#)
 - **May 20:** [WACD Board of Directors meeting](#)
 - **May 29-30:** WACD's Legislative Workshop (Ellensburg)
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Executive Corner

Regulation or Relationships?

Echoing in my mind these days is about how conservation goals are achieved. For some, the answer is regulation. This is the default approach we see from regulators because it is what they know. It is predictable. When you factor in the cost of enforcement, and maintaining staffing sufficient for equitable enforcement, it is also very expensive. A regulatory approach often comes across as disrespectful to landowners and resource users, and eroding trust.

Our community believes in relationships first. We build those relationships over time, building trust and community in the process. Conservation districts work with customers to craft customized solutions that fit each customer's unique mix of needs and resources. This process is respectful and affirming. It avoids costly "lawyering up" and often results in projects that are sustained by landowners for a long time.

In both approaches, the nominal goal is the same: to improve the quality of natural resources. In both approaches, public funds are spent to achieve that goal. I view regulation as one side of this public coin and relationships as the other side.

Relationships should always be our first step. If we're going to spend public dollars on improving natural resource conditions, the respectful way to do so is to build relationships with resource users and work with them over time to help them adopt proven conservation practices. In so doing, we help create local role models that help advance a culture of conservation in that neighborhood, community, or watershed.

I'm not saying that regulation is never needed because clearly, in some situations, it is. Generally speaking, it should not be the first answer that comes to mind when we see a particular situation involving natural resource impairment. We should flip the coin to "heads" and work on the relationship side, investing in that work first, giving people the opportunity to control their own outcomes. When the coin lands on "tails" and regulation is the first response, we essentially take control away from people, creating ever more friction that ultimately leads to more regulation, higher costs, and less trust.

Relationships are the better investment, hands down.

We'd like to hear from you

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

Always yours for conservation,



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Latest Posts on the Hub

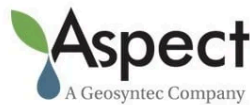
- [PMC Update for March 7, 2024](#)
- [Urban and Community Conservation Grants Now Open for Districts](#)
- [Palouse CD Seeks Soil and Water Conservation Intern](#)
- [Feb 26 – March 1 General Legislative Review](#)
- [2023: A Year in Review for the San Juan Islands Conservation District](#)
- [USDA Designates Two Counties in Washington as Contiguous Natural Disaster Areas](#)

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