



Washington Association of Conservation Districts

Five Things to Know for March 14, 2024

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Special note: NFO for Conservation Planners

We are hearing that NRCS is about to release the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO) for conservation planners. We expect it will be open to individual conservation districts as well as the State Conservation Commission. Stay tuned!

1 – Legislative Session Recap

Budgets

In case you missed it, \$3.5 million was allocated in this legislative session to Conservation Technical Assistance for districts in FY25. Additionally, the Commission will be able to hire two

additional staff and (via agency request) be allowed to use state funds to support landowners for one year if they've been disenrolled in FSA's CREP program. The new CTA money is a solid win, representing the first time districts received an increase in this area during a short session. WACD pushed hard for it knowing it was the top priority of our member-districts.

Caveat: the budget has not yet been signed by the Governor. He has until April 1st to sign bills, and traditionally, the budgets are the last bills to be signed. WACD may ask your district to send letters in support of the budget. You can track all of the Governor's bill actions at governor.wa.gov, including the legislation on [WACD's bill tracker](#). While we expect him to sign the operating and capital budgets, we watch this process until the Governor's signature is inked and final!

Legislator Retirements and Candidacy Announcements

With the end of the Session numerous legislators have announced that they are retiring or running for another office, with additional announcements expected before the May filing deadline. These changes will create a very different political landscape for WACD to navigate next legislative session. Below is a list of the members that have made public declarations that they will not run for their current seats again in 2024:

- Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig (D-Spokane) retiring (the Senate Democratic Caucus will also need to elect a new Majority Leader after the 2024 general election)
- Senator Sam Hunt (D-Olympia) retiring
- Senator Karen Keiser (D-Des Moines) retiring
- Senator Mark Mullet (D-Issaquah) running for Governor
- Senator Kevin Van De Wege (D-Sequim) running for Commissioner of Public Lands
- Senator Lynda Wilson (R-Vancouver) retiring
- Rep. Jessica Bateman (D-Olympia) running for open Senate seat
- Rep. Frank Chopp (D - Seattle) retiring
- Rep. Kelly Chambers (R-Puyallup) running for Pierce Co. Executive
- Rep. Mike Chapman (D-Port Angeles) running for open Senate seat
- Rep. Jacqueline Maycumber (R-Republic) running for 5th Congressional
- Rep. Bill Ramos (D-Issaquah) running for open Senate seat
- Rep. Marcus Riccelli (D-Spokane) running for open Senate seat
- Rep. JT Wilcox (R-Yelm) retiring
- Rep. Paul Harris (R-Battle Ground) running for open Senate Seat
- Rep. Joel Kretz (R-Waucanda) retiring
- Rep. Spencer Hutchins (R-Gig Harbor) retiring

Additionally, a number of members are seeking other offices, but will return to the Legislature should they lose in November. These members include:

- Senator Manka Dhingra (D-Redmond) running for Attorney General

- Senator Patty Kuderer (D-Bellevue) running for Insurance Commissioner
- Senator Drew MacEwan (R-Shelton) running for 6th Congressional District
- Senator Emily Randall (D-Bremerton) running for 6th Congressional District
- Senator Rebecca Saldaña (D-Seattle) running for Commissioner of Public Lands

Be sure to subscribe to our **Legislative Updates Newsletter** so that next session you stay in the know! ([click here to subscribe](#)).

2 – Natural Climate Solutions Grant Opportunity

The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation is tapping into the Pacific Northwest's (PNW) strength in conservation innovation with a new, open-call for proposals to invest up to \$5 million in climate change mitigation projects in the PNW. The [Environment RFP: Natural Climate Solutions](#) in the PNW initiative will fund three to five rigorous, place-based Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) efforts in the region.

The foundation's open RFP process is open to nonprofits as well as units of state or local government; state colleges or universities; state or federally recognized tribal communities or tribes, as well as tribal colleges and universities. Recognizing the longstanding, regional leadership, ecological stewardship, and knowledge of [indigenous peoples and local communities \(IPLCs\)](#) in local conservation efforts, projects that are led by, or work in direct partnership with, IPLCs are of particular interest to the foundation.

Interested parties will submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) for their NCS project by **April 12**. After vetting by the foundation team, selected organizations will be invited to submit a formal proposal by May 15. Proposals will be reviewed by an independent panel of science advisors, with grantees announced in summer 2024.

3 – National Conservation Planning Partnership Survey

The [National Conservation Planning Partnership](#) (NCPP) is asking for your feedback! NCPP is gathering information on your level of support, knowledge, and experience with conservation planning and the conservation planning process. This survey is a component of the NCPP's newly developed strategic plan and your identification of barriers can help the NCPP address factors that impede the initial certification of new planners and advancing to the next planner certification level. Your feedback will also provide an understanding of the barriers to the conservation planning process. Most importantly, the NCPP is interested in ways to overcome any of the limitations and barriers identified.

The [survey](#) will take between 8 and 10 minutes of your time. The results will be aggregated and analyzed collectively. All individual responses will be confidential. Within 60 days of the survey's closing, a report of the survey's findings, along with recommendations, will be posted on the NCPP website. Please submit your feedback by **Friday, March 22**. For more information on NCPP, please visit our [website](#).

4 – WADE Conference Registration is Now Open

The Washington Association of District Employees (WADE) Conference will be held **June 10-12, 2024**, at the Sleeping Lady Resort in Leavenworth, WA. ALL in-person registrations are due on or before Wednesday, May 1, 2024, with May 1 being the absolute deadline for sending in your registration and guaranteeing a spot at the training. Check or payment is not necessary at the time of registration. Early Registration is before Monday, April 1st and is discounted.

Find the WADE Registration Form linked [here](#).

See the full Schedule of Track Sessions [here](#).

If you have questions, please call Dawn Bekenyi at Whatcom CD at (360) 526-2381 x101 or email dlb@whatcomcd.org. Scholarships are available! Scholarship applications must be received by 4:30 pm on **March 15, 2024**.

The WADE Scholarship Application can be Accessed [here](#).

Can't attend in person? CTD will offer a virtual attendance option for most sessions again this year. Zoom registration coming soon!

WADE



Conservation from the Ground Up

5 – Plant Materials Questionnaire ~ Last Call

Last Call, make your plant needs known! 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. 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. Survey responses are Due **March 15th**.

Thank you from WACD's Plant Materials Task Force!

Upcoming Events

2024

- **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

Lessons learned that apply to our events

I am reflecting on this week on an amateur radio experience I had last weekend...but keep reading, because I learned some things that will help us provide a better annual conference! I don't think there are many licensed amateur radio operators (nicknamed "hams") in our community, but what I observed transcends that factor.

I attended a hamfest. Think: a swap meet for nerdy hams from all over the Pacific Northwest. The [Tacoma Mike & Key Amateur Radio Club hosts a hamfest](#) every year in the Washington State Fair exhibition hall in Puyallup. That building is more than 300 feet long, i.e., it is the size of a football field...and it has two floors. Both floors were packed with tables loaded with all kinds of new and old radio gear and accessories.

I left very early in the morning because I wanted to get there when it opened. The best deals go fast. **Takeaway #1: if you are an event organizer, you should check on construction along the most used routes to your event.** Northbound I-5 was closed (fully at times, one lane only at other times) while work on an overpass at Joint Base Lewis McChord occurred. This was not

shared in any of the pre-hamfest information I received. Fortunately, I was scanning local repeater frequencies while I drove and heard about the problems people were having soon enough to detour. Instead of continuing up I-5, I went through Yelm, McKenna, and Roy, along the east side of JBLM. I don't think I saved any time traveling this route but I certainly felt less frustrated than I would have had I been stuck in stop-and-go traffic!

Takeaway #2: label the special events and activities. There was license testing being offered for new hams, but you had to hunt for that space and ask a lot of people in order to eventually discover where it was happening. Many ham radio clubs (including my [Shelton club](#)) had hamfest tables but very few were labeled, making it hard to find certain tables. Our national association, the [Amateur Radio Relay League](#), was represented and they had a big banner. The contrast between their well-identified space and the rest of the spaces really caught my attention.

A corollary of this is also being clear what your registration does, and does not, include. My criticism every year of a certain national organization's annual conference is they don't clearly identify which meals are included in the registration fee and which ones are either extra or invitation only. That creates unnecessary frustration.

Takeaway #3: provide some social spaces. The hamfest was wall-to-wall people, tables, radios, and parts of radios. To navigate you had to squeeze past people, often twisting to slide through openings that weren't wide enough for most people to walk through. I'm not a fan of tightly packed crowds of people I don't know, so this was less than comfortable for me. There were a dozen small cafe tables at one end of the hall where a person could sit and relax, but that wasn't sufficient for the socializing that was going on in the spaces between tables, where people would stop and plug up the works while they caught up with each other.

Takeaway #4: go into the event with a plan. I've shared this before. The best way to get great value from an event is to make a plan before you attend. Who do you want to catch up with? Write down those names. Who are the folks you've heard about but haven't met? List them. What sessions or events do you want to attend? Write those down. What new skill do you want to learn? Write it down. Who do you want to remember with a special thank you or expression of appreciation? Capture those names down, too. Finally, write reminders to yourself, like: socialize more at meals, or make myself more accessible. I put all of these reminders on a 3x5 card and carry it in my shirt pocket so it's easy to catch myself up during the event. Pre-planning what I want to get from the event makes my time more productive and I end up with fewer of those post-event moments where you remember after the fact that you forgot something or someone important.

All of these takeaways apply to the work WACD does for members. It applies to WADE, the Conservation Commission, and others, too. I find that our conservation community uses more specialized code talk than most other groups I've been associated with (yes, even the ham radio people). If that's not off-putting enough, we also assume everyone knows the ins and outs of an event. If we are truly seeking to welcome new attendees and help folks engage with who we are and what we do, we need to label things and provide clear instructions so those new folks know where to go and what to do.

By now, you might be realizing that even though I'm writing about the hamfest, I'm thinking of WACD's next annual conference and business meeting. This annual event is never far from our minds, and this year, we are getting started on it earlier than before. Our goal, as always, is to

provide the best value we can to our members and partners. I appreciate the lessons I picked up at the hamfest and expect some of the takeaways will find their way into our annual event this fall, to be held in Spokane.

If you have suggestions that would improve the annual conference, please do send them our way. We're also on the hunt for a great opening session speaker, someone who can raise the energy in the room and help bring us together. We'd love to hear your ideas!

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

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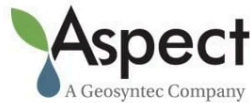
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