



Washington Association of Conservation Districts

Five Things to Know for April 11, 2024

<https://wadistricts.org> ☼ <https://wadistricts.us> ☼ <https://wacdpmc.org>



Our celebration of **Native Plant Month** continues with this friendly reminder from Heather Wendt, WACD Director of Development & Engagement, to [get outside](#). The wildflowers are blooming! This photo of Heather and her daughter Ally was taken last summer on a hike near Mt. Rainier National Park. Find a WNPS guided hike near you: <https://www.wnps.org/events>.

In This Issue

(This particular issue of the Five Things is packed full of information, meaning it is a bit longer than usual! We hope you appreciate the extra content.)

Congratulations to Ryan Baye!

NACD Special Request

Five Things to Know:

1. **Preparing for the Spring Legislative Workshop**
2. **WACD Board Meeting, April 15th**
3. **WADE Award Deadline is May 10th**
4. **NACD Stewardship Week, April 28th - May 5th**
5. **Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz**

Executive Corner: Reflections on Mental Health and Farmers

Congratulations to Ryan Baye!

As we send this newsletter out the door, one of our own is graduating from the AgForestry Leadership program. Ryan Baye, WACD's Director of Legislative & Member Services, is graduating as a member of Class 44. We expect to have more photos and some commentary from him next week, but here's a teaser photo, courtesy of the [AgForestry website](#). WACD has been very pleased to sponsor Ryan throughout this journey! Congratulations Ryan! (If you don't immediately recognize him, just look for the bow tie!)



NACD Special Request

From NACD to the WACD Executive Director:

NACD understands that districts continue to experience issues and delays with USDA's Service Center leasing processes, and we're working to gain a more comprehensive understanding of these challenges and their impacts. We're reaching out to request any information you may be able to provide about the specific issues districts in your state have encountered while trying to complete leasing agreements. Any information you're able to provide by Wednesday, April 16 would be greatly appreciated. We do not plan to share anyone's location information so as to not compromise any ongoing negotiations/discussions.

If your conservation district is experiencing issues with USDA's Service Center leasing process, please reach out to WACD Executive Director Tom Salzer before Wednesday, April 16 by email to tsalzer@wadistricts.org.

Five Things to Know

1 — Preparing for the Spring Legislative Workshop

A portion of the [May 29-30 Spring Legislative Workshop](#) will be focused on visioning the future that conservation districts want. We will suggest thinking 10, 20, and 30 years ahead. To help you prepare for this work, some homework may prove beneficial.

This week, we suggest you read [Building a Future-Focused Mindset](#). Some nuggets from that article include these quotes:

To build future-focused organizations, stop trying to guess what the future is. Instead, start taking action.

If you're future-focused...you build your business towards the future you want.

Scenario planning is as much about helping to build a future-focused mindset as it is solving a strategic problem.

Your time spent speculating is better used towards building the future. By the time the future becomes clear, it has turned into the present.

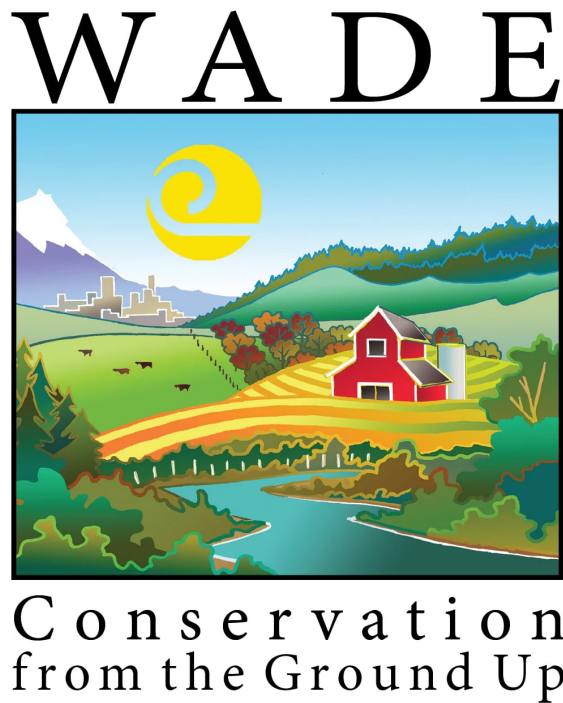
2 — WACD Board Meeting, April 15th

WACD's Board of Directors will hold a regular meeting via Zoom on Monday, April 15, at 6:00 pm with in-person attendance available at WACD's Olympia office. The draft agenda is available [here](#).

Meeting documents are being posted to a Box.com folder at <https://wacd1.app.box.com/folder/256935140602>

3 — WADE Award Deadline is May 10th

The **Washington Association of District Employees** board is now accepting nominations for WADE Employee of the Year. Please visit the [WADE website](#) for guidelines. If you wish to make a nomination, please fill out [this form](#).



The deadline for nominations is **Friday, May 10, 2024**. If you need any assistance or have any questions, please contact Dave Hedrick at 509-775-3473 ext. 105 or dave.hedrick@ferrycd.org.

4 — NACD Stewardship Week, April 28th - May 5th

[NACD's annual Stewardship Week](#) (April 28 - May 5) is coming up, and this year students will learn about forestry under the theme "**May the Forest Be With You, Always!**"

A wide range of forestry education materials are available printed or for free digital download on [NACD's Marketplace](#). Check out the Education Guide, worksheets, bookmarks, and more. Please share these resources with local educators to help us teach the next generation of foresters!

5 — Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz

In September 2024, the National Recreation and Parks Association is hosting its 6th annual Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz. Parks for Pollinators is a national campaign to raise awareness and community involvement in the pollinator crisis.

Hosting a Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz event allows communities to explore your parks, engage in environmental issues, and see how many pollinators and pollinator-friendly plants they can find.

[Sign up now](#) to host your own BioBlitz this September and receive all the materials you need for a successful event! By hosting an event, you are entered to win one of three \$1,000 prizes or one of three prize packs from Scotts Miracle-Gro to help you further your efforts with native habitat and pollinator protection strategies.

Upcoming Events

- **April 15:** [WACD Board of Directors meeting](#)
 - **May 7-9:** [Northwest Community Forests Biennial Forum](#) (Enterprise, OR)
 - **May 14-16:** [WSCC Planning and Regular meeting](#)
 - **May 20:** [WACD Board of Directors meeting](#)
 - **May 29-30:** [WACD's Legislative Workshop \(Ellensburg\)](#)
 - **June 11, 12, and 14:** [Regenerative Ag Farm Tours](#), sponsored by the Spokane CD. These sessions are being held in Madras (June 11), Pilot Rock (June 12), and Royal City (June 14).
 - **June 17:** [WACD Board of Directors meeting](#)
-

Executive Corner

Reflections on Mental Health and Farmers

According to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) in 2023:

In the past two decades, suicide rates have been consistently higher in rural America than in urban America. Rural residents have 1.5 times higher rate of emergency department visits for nonfatal self-harm than urban residents.

A 2022 article published by the [University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign](#) says:

Recent data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated that farmers are twice as likely as people in other occupations to die by suicide.

[This 2024 article](#) cites a higher number:

Farmers are 3.5 times more likely to die by suicide compared to any other occupational group, according to researchers.

Suicide among our agricultural producers is a real concern. As I write this, I also recognize that many of us have probably had some contact with a farmer suicide situation if only because our conservation districts are hubs for farmers and ranchers throughout Washington State.

I write today not to bring up uncomfortable memories or to cause pain, but to highlight the need for more support of people in farming, ranching, forestry, and fishing. They provide our food and building materials. Their work supports entire communities.

Farmer suicide is very real in Washington State. A [2022 Seattle Times article](#) makes several points, including:

- *"...many agricultural workers experience depression in isolation."*
- *"A [survey of nearly 800 agricultural producers](#) in 13 Western states found that [78% of respondents](#) are experiencing stress that is impacting their sleep, physical and mental health and relationships."*
- *"[Only 12% of Washington residents](#) live in an area where they can expect their mental health needs to be met."*

The Seattle Times article also talks about why people want to farm:

They do it because they find meaning in the work, he said, otherwise known as the "[Agrarian Imperative](#)" — a term coined by [Michael Rosmann](#). It's a genetically programmed instinct that drives farmers to hang on to their land at all costs, tolerate unusual pain and adversity, and take uncommon risks.

"We develop an intense attachment to the land we work. We take great pride in our crops and livestock," Rosmann wrote. "Farmers are aware that we are producing essentials for life."

Many people inherit farm work from generations before and feel like failures if they struggle to maintain the land or produce the same quantities of goods, he said, despite the introduction of new threats like climate change or rising production costs.

Washington State University is working on the problem of farmer suicide. I recommend their [Farm Stress & Suicide Prevention page](#) as a gateway to understanding this issue and seeking additional resources.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture has also been active in this arena, receiving a \$500,000 grant in 2021 to work with the Department of Health and WSU to address "[stress and suicide prevention in the agriculture community](#)." In 2025, the Washington State Legislature allocated funds in the FY 2025 budget to establish a workgroup to "[concentrate on mental health and suicide prevention within the agricultural community...](#)"

That workgroup is tasked with producing a draft report summarizing their recommendations by December 31, 2024. I am looking forward to that report. Suicide and self-harm in our agricultural communities is an urgent, important issue. I know good, smart people are working on this, but it still feels like awareness and progress are moving too slowly. Losing one more farmer is one too many.

Members of our conservation community may encounter this kind of situation simply because of the way their work is done, so [becoming better informed](#) may position them to be a

resource that saves a life.

We'd like to hear from you

As always, we look forward to your ideas and questions. Please reach out to us by email to oly@wacd.org. Emails sent to that address reach the entire Executive Office team!

Always yours for conservation,



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Latest Posts on the Hub

- [‘Cows can swim’ | Kittitas Co. third graders learn new facts at agricultural field day](#)
- [WACD FY25 Annual Plan of Work Draft ~ Review Requested](#)
- [City of Chelan and Cascadia Conservation District offer free yard waste disposal events - Lake Chelan Mirror](#)
- [Youth Conservation Corps now accepting applicants | The Journal of the San Juan Islands](#)
- [Conservation districts to hold forest landowner workshop](#)
- [USDA is Accepting RCPP Proposals Through July 2nd](#)

Recent Posts

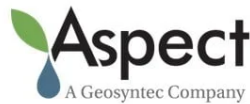
Jobs

Reading List

Thank you to the 2023 WACD Annual Meeting Sponsors



Washington Department of
Fish and Wildlife



WACD encourages you to consider patronizing sponsors in appreciation of their important support.

Sponsors

- [AgWest](#)
- [AGPRO](#)
- [Arrowleaf Consulting](#)
- [Aspect Consulting](#)
- [Banner Bank](#)
- [Country Financial](#)
- [BFI Native Seeds](#)
- Larry Davis (individual sponsor)
- [Edward Jones](#)
- [Enduris](#)
- [envu](#)
- [JTI](#)
- [KR Creative Strategies](#)
- [McGregor Company](#)
- [Monaghan Consulting](#)
- [Odessa Trading Co.](#)
- [Plants of the Wild](#)
- [Rainier Seeds](#)
- [RDO Equipment Co.](#)
- Tom Salzer (individual sponsor)
- [Springbrook Express](#)
- [Tapteal Native Plants](#)
- [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)
- [Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife](#)
- [Washington State Conservation Commission](#)
- [Weyerhaeuser](#)
- [Wilbur-Ellis](#)

Pass it on!

Please pass this newsletter on to others in our conservation community so they can subscribe and be as informed as you are!

SUBSCRIBE

More information is available on the WACD Hub!

Visit the WACD Hub

We welcome your [feedback](#)

[Subscribe](#) | [Unsubscribe](#) | [Manage your subscription](#) | [Contact WACD](#)

1219 11th Ave SE, Olympia, WA 98501
(564) 669-7540

