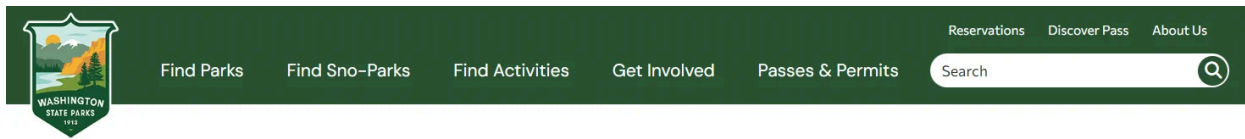




Washington Association of Conservation Districts

Five Things to Know for April 25, 2024

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Where to see wildflowers – and avoid the crowds

If you are wondering where to go to see wildflowers while avoiding crowds of people trying to do the same, the [Washington State Parks website](#) is a great resource. You can find hikes all across the state of Washington. Follow the flowers folks, find your joy!

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Five Things to Know

1 – April 2024 Legislative Update

Stay informed on the latest happenings in Olympia with this update from WACD lobbyist Brynn Brady. Here is an excerpt from her report:

Senator Rebecca Saldaña (D-37) bowed out of the race for Commissioner of Public Lands after King County Councilmember Dave Upthegrove secured the environmental vote with the endorsement of Washington Conservation Action. Saldaña will return to the Senate. Former Senator from the 47th LD Mona Das has also left the race.

A full copy of Brynn's report can be found here: <https://wadistricts.us/2024/04/april-2024-election-update/>

2 – Keeping your Policies and Procedures Relevant

WACD staff have spent considerable time this past fiscal year overhauling [WACD's Policies and Procedures](#). We have completed updates to the WACD Board Policy and Procedure Manual and our Financial Policy and Procedure Manual. As we begin the process of updating our Employee Handbook I found this article by MRSC's Cheryl Grant very insightful "Using 'Why' to Keep Your Policies and Procedures Relevant." Here is an excerpt:

Smaller entities are not the only places where, when asked a question about policies and/or procedures, the answer from staff still remains, "That's the way we've always done it," "That's how I was shown" (which the actions of either may or may not be correct for the task), or "It's our policy."

I would recommend that we resolve to banish those answers — because these are really just excuses — and instead, make improvements by asking "why," finding the answer, and fixing the problem.

If you are not familiar with MRSC and the great services they provide, I recommend visiting their website: <https://mrsc.org/>.

3 – Spring Legislative Workshop Agenda & Registration Info

Note the new hotel reservation requirement dates at the bottom of the page!

WACD's Spring Legislative Workshop for Conservation District Supervisors, Managers, and Partners will take place May 29th and May 30th at the Hal Homes Community Center - [209 N. Ruby St., Ellensburg, WA 98926](#).

Agenda:

May 29th

10:00 am - 10:30 am - Registration & Social
10:30 am - 10:45 am - Greetings & Introductions
10:45 am - 11:45 pm - Status of Resolutions, Updates & Priorities
12:00 pm - 12:30 pm - Lunch (Provided)
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm - WACD Committee Updates
1:30 pm - 3:30 pm - Sustainable Funding Committee Work Session
3:30 pm - 4:00 pm - Wrap-up & Homework
5:00 pm - Optional No-Host Evening Social

May 30th

8:00 am - 8:30 am - Light Breakfast and Social
8:30 am - 9:30 am - Partnership Roundtable
9:30 am - 10:00 am - Rates and Charges Discussion and Next Steps
10:00 am - 10:30 am - Elections Discussion
10:30 am - 10:45 am - Break
10:45 am - 11:45 am - Strategic Visioning Session
11:45 am - 12:00 pm - Wrap-up

The meeting will be offered in person and remotely via Zoom.

If you plan on attending either in person or remotely please [REGISTER HERE](#).

Hotel Information: A block of rooms at the government rate has been reserved at the following hotels under the **Group Name: WACD:**

- [Best Western Plus](#), 211 Umptanum Rd, Ellensburg, WA 98926 - (509) 925-4244
 - **Room Reservations must be made by: 4/29/2024**
- [Hampton Inn](#), 2705 Triple L Loop, Ellensburg, WA 98926 - (509) 933-1600
 - **Room Reservations must be made by: 5/19/2024**

Questions? Contact: Heather Wendt, 509-873-2669, hwendt@wadistricts.org

4 – NRCS Conservation Outcomes Webinar Series

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is hosting free, one-hour webinars to share key findings, data, and tools to inform voluntary conservation across the nation's working lands. Their next upcoming webinar is:

May 2nd: Mapping Riverscapes to Support Productive and Resilient Working Lands

On May 2 at 2:00 p.m. eastern (11:00 am pacific), Dr. Joseph Wheaton with Utah State University's Department of Watershed Sciences and Jeremy Maestas, a Sagebrush Ecosystems Specialist with the NRCS Western National Technical Support Center, will share new insights and resources for effectively targeting wetland restorations in the riverscapes of the intermountain West. Findings may be used to inform conservation in riverscapes across the region. [Learn more.](#)

Visit the Conservation Outcomes Webinar Series [webpage](#) to access a calendar of upcoming webinars and recordings of past events.

5 – Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program Video

The Columbia Basin Conservation District in partnership with multiple organizations are working to address the declining Odessa Aquifer through the Groundwater Replacement Program (OGWRP). OGWRP is a regional effort that is building the necessary infrastructure for farmers to exchange valid state-issued Odessa groundwater rights for Columbia Basin Project water.

The East Columbia Basin Irrigation District recently release a video "The Race to Rescue a Declining Aquifer in Central Washington." The video can be played [here](#).



Optional Homework for the Spring Legislative Workshop

A good portion of the Spring Legislative Workshop will be focused on visioning the future 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 recommend learning about STEEP. STEEP is an acronym for: Social, Technological, Economical, Environmental, and Political. STEEP analysis is a framework for identifying how Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, and Political external factors affect an organization. These five factors are considered to be [external factors](#). External factors are outside forces that can have a positive or a negative impact on your organization.

If you'd like to learn more about this approach, check out [What is STEEP Analysis, How-To Guide, and Examples](#).

Upcoming Events

2024

- **May 14-16:** [WSCC Planning and Regular meeting](#)
 - **May 20:** [WACD Board of Directors meeting](#)
 - **May 29-30:** [WACD's Legislative Workshop \(Ellensburg\)](#)
 - **June 17:** [WACD Board of Directors meeting](#)
-

WACD PMC Plants in the Wild!

Last weekend, volunteers gathered to install native plants in the [Shelton Veterans Village](#). This project includes landscaping support from the Mason Conservation District.

Tom Salzer's son and daughter-in-law — part of the group of volunteers — noticed some plant bags were labeled **WACD Plant Materials Center!**

The Shelton Veterans Village posted a [thank you note on Facebook](#) after the local Rotary Club turned out in force to help plant natives.

Here's a quick summary from Evan Bauder, Executive Director of the Mason Conservation District:

Mason Conservation District (MCD) partnered with Quixote Communities to construct a market garden at the recently opened Shelton Veterans Village. The intention of the garden is to provide therapeutic gardening opportunities, self-sufficient food production, and improved pollinator habitat. There are many native pollinator-friendly plants from the Plant Materials Center disbursed throughout the garden. The garden also includes espalier apple trees, other fruit trees, a sizeable blueberry patch, beds for a variety of garden vegetables, herbs, and a giant tomato trellis.

Many of the materials for this project were donated by community members, organizations, and businesses. More than 60 community members came together to support the residents by planting the garden in celebration of Earth Day. Over the next year MCD staff will work with the veterans to provide technical assistance around garden production. The hope is to eventually sponsor a space at Shelton Farmers Market for the Shelton Veterans Village residents.

View photos at <https://wacd1.box.com/s/n3splhp7recpi270duafx0db3zj99d29>. We'll make future photo galleries available at <https://bit.ly/WACD-Photo-Galleries>.



The plants that WACD grows make a difference in many landscapes. We look forward to sharing more sightings of PMC plants with you. If you have photos of WACD PMC plants being used on the landscape, please send them to Heather Wendt at hwendt@wadistricts.org.

Executive Corner

Thinking about the Spring Legislative Workshop

Let me reprise what we've shared so far to help you prepare for the [Spring Legislative Workshop](#) at the end of May, and take a peak at what is ahead:

- In the April 11 issue of the Five Things newsletter, we suggested reading [Building a Future-Focused Mindset](#).
- In the April 18 issue of the Five Things, we asked you to watch 23 minutes of the [Beyond the Now](#) video (start at the 30-minute mark).
- Today (April 25), we introduced you to [STEEP analysis](#) which is concerned with understanding external factors that may affect your organization.
- In the May 3 issue of the Five Things, we'll talk about assessing internal factors that may affect your organization. The takeaway here is that you usually can't control external factors but you can often control internal factors.
- In the May 16 issue of the Five Things, we'll summarize what we covered on April 11, April 18, April 25, and May 3. Note that starting in May, we'll be publishing the Five Things on our summer schedule, i.e., on the first and third Thursdays of the month.

All of this work is optional preparation for the Workshop but I hope you will take some time to look through the information.

I'm certain you've done brainstorming before. One of the limitations of brainstorming is your thinking is often constrained by the here-and-now conditions you face. Especially with our community of people who lean heavily toward being "do-ers," whenever a good idea surfaces, the group tends to immediately jump into how to get it done: what stands in the way, what has to get set aside, who will do it, how long will it take, how much it will cost, etc.

Thinking in the now like this really puts a damper on visioning what conservation districts could become. We are spending some time on the idea of future thinking because we want you to be able to move beyond our usual "now and how" response and instead consider what could be. One way to do that is to shift your thinking from the here-and-now to a point sometime in the future.

I'm picking 10 years in the future, simply because that's a short enough time that many of us will be around to see what happens, and long enough that we can dream about it. What we are asking you to do is to shift your perspective to 2034 and ask: what conditions do you want affecting your conservation district in 2034?

Once you can wrap your mind around a desired future condition for your district in the year 2034, then you can look to the present-day factors identified in your analyses of internal and external factors affecting your organization. Some of those factors are strengths that will help move you to your desired future condition and some are barriers. A key point about external factors is you are not in control of them, so to work with those factors, you need to figure out how to manage or guide them.

Remember that while you do this, you are standing in the year 2034 and looking back at 2024. You'll be seeing things that you could have supported more strongly in 2024 and things that you could have invested effort in that would generate benefits by 2034.

As an example, one of the big external factors for WACD is legislators. The longer you are in our conservation district world, the more you come to recognize that the Legislature is always changing. People come and people go. A few stick around for a long time, but this is the exception, not the rule. If I stand in 2034 and look back at what we could have done better in

2024, I conclude that we could have built out a much more robust program of reaching and teaching new legislators about conservation districts. That's an opportunity where investment of time, money, and energy would pay dividends for our entire community, sometimes for years to come.

I hope this brief introduction to future thinking and how to step out of the now for a moment and stand in the future makes sense and is helpful to you. Not everyone will be able to do this, but I think this kind of exercise is exactly what we need to try. It is something that will help us break free of our typical pattern of reacting to changes every year. It gives us the opportunity to look farther ahead and be more intentional about building the future we want and need.

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. Emails sent to that address reach the entire Executive Office team!

Always yours for conservation,



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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- [Palouse Conservation District And The City Of Moscow Present The City Nature Challenge](#)
- [Two local Conservation Districts getting funding for water quality.](#)
- [Ecology grants to fund seven Eastern Washington water quality improvement projects](#)
- [April 2024 Election Update](#)
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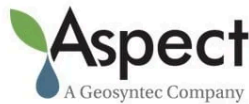
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