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Washington Association of Conservation Districts

WACD Week 1 Legislative Update

January 06, 2026

Welcome to the new year. This is WACD's first legislative update for 2026. We hope these emails will be of use and benefit to our members as we collectively navigate the new legislative session.

We will be using this newsletter to expand on legislative priorities, break down budget language, track various proposals that relate to the world of voluntary conservation, and point out opportunities for districts to participate in the process. These weekly mailings will go into greater detail every Monday than will be provided to the membership in WACD's **Five Things** newsletter and is oriented for those who want to more closely observe the goings-on in Olympia.

If there are additional ways WACD can be of service to our membership during session, or want to ask about anything you see in one of these newsletters, all you have to do is pick up the phone or write to [Tom](#), [Heather](#), or [Ryan](#)

1. WACD Bill Tracker for 2026

Each year, WACD identifies and tracks bills that could impact our member-districts or relates to a resolution adopted by the association. You can sort information more easily, and we'll be keeping track of committee hearings and dates for you to know what's happening each week. Take a look at the 103 bills we've identified for the start of session (<https://wadistricts.us/wacd-watch-list/>)

2. Legislative Day Information

Each year, WACD organizes a **Legislative Day** in Olympia to help coordinate district engagement with the legislative process. For 2026, our Legislative Day will be **February 10th**. We are asking districts this year to fill out [a short form](#) by **January 9th** so we know how many meals to prepare, which districts want WACD to make their legislative appointments, and which CDs are wanting to showcase their outreach materials for legislators.

If you haven't seen the Five Things newsletter the last few weeks, WACD has secured a block of hotel rooms at the state's per diem, and the Columbia Room in the Capitol building to rest your weary feet. This year, the hotel and breakfast will be held at the [DoubleTree Olympia](#). One perk of staying at the DoubleTree is that you do not have to find parking at the Capitol, and instead ride the Capitol Dash bus. Please make your hotel reservations by **January 24th** to ensure you **secure the state per diem rate by using this [link](#)**. If you are staying an extra night for the Ombuds workgroup you can adjust the dates at the top of the page.

Note ~ with the half day SCC budget development meeting the day before Legislative Day and the Ombuds workgroup meeting the day after, please book your rooms early in case we need to add to the hotel room block.

3. Pre-filled Bill of Interest

Legislators can introduce bills at any point during the year, typically called "pre-filled" legislation because they're submitted before the start of the legislative session. One bill of note this year is [HB 2154 - Concerning land ownership by conservation districts](#). It would prohibit CDs from purchasing parcels larger than 20 acres being used for agricultural production, purchasing any easements on said parcels, and would compel each CD to publicize information about any property they owned.

This bill is coming from a legislator who is opposed to a proposal that a conservation district in Whitman County purchase farm ground. We are unsure if there is interest in the legislature to dive deeply into this issue, or if it is the perspective of a single individual.

If there is a bill hearing on this bill, we expect CDs will wish to share their unique circumstances on how property came into the districts' possession. And bring forward the threat of agricultural land conversion across all of Washington.

4. Governor's Budget

The headline from the Governor's budget released two weeks ago is a proposed \$676,000 cut to the Commission's "activities pertaining to technical services to conservation districts" for FY27. Other potential items of note for our membership include:

- \$6.8 million to WSDA to eradicate Japanese Beetle and Spongy Moth.
- \$176 million to DNR for fire suppression expenses in FY26.
- 11.1 million in the capital budget to RCO for Salmon Recovery Funding Board projects.

If you are interested in review the proposals for yourself, the [agency summaries](#) and [legislative proposals](#) are available online.

5. Legislative Lunches

One new feature of WACD's advocacy this year is the introduction of Legislative Lunch, a drop-in Zoom meeting every Monday from 12 - 1 o'clock. These will start next Monday, January 12th, on the first day of the legislative session.

The purpose of these optional chats are to respond to the request from our membership for more direct engagement on legislative topics. So come and ask questions, learn what's going on, and how to participate in the legislative process. You can reach out to [Ryan](#) for a calendar invite or follow [this link](#) to download the events.



"Blanket of Snow", courtesy of [WSCC's Flicker account](#), as a treat for those who reached the bottom of the page.

Taken by Joanna Cowles, Walla Walla County Conservation District



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