

WACD DEI Committee Report

Executive Summary:

The DEI Committee was created to provide guidance and recommendations on how to implement the proposed items in Resolutions 2020-05 and 06. A Charter was developed prior to convening the Committee members, who were selected and appointed as a representative group of WACD member CD's. The Committee began meeting in May and had their final meeting in September. Over the course of their meetings, the committee members were able to develop recommendations that they believe will ultimately support all of the work that CDs do, and benefit their communities. The Committee reached consensus in providing the recommendations below.

Committee members:

- **North Central Area**
 - Craig Nelson – Okanogan Conservation District
- **Northeast Area**
 - Elsa Bowen – Lincoln County Conservation District
 - Alex Case-Cohen – Pend Oreille Conservation District
- **Northwest Area**
 - Linda Lyshall – Snohomish Conservation District
 - Chris Porter – King Conservation District
- **South Central Area**
 - Mike Tobin – North Yakima Conservation District
- **Southeast Area**
 - Annie Byerly – Walla Walla County Conservation District
 - Mary Collins – Palouse Conservation District
- **Southwest Area**
 - David Iyall – Thurston Conservation District
 - Mike Nordin – Grays Harbor and Pacific Conservation Districts
- **Natural Resources Conservation Service**
 - Nick Vira (advisor to the Committee)

- **Washington State Conservation Commission**
 - Bill Eller (advisor to the Committee)
- **Additional representatives of districts that sponsored DEI resolutions:**
 - Jeanette Dorner (Pierce CD)
 - Sue Marshall (Clark CD)

- **Committee Staff**
 - Ryan Baye
 - Tom Salzer

Facilitators:

- Sarah Dryfoos, {R}evolution Lab
 - Dr. Cindy Caldwell, DEI Management
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Original Recommendations from 2020-06

1 – Help conservation districts to work with underrepresented communities in their service area to understand what natural resource concerns are important to them and to find ways to incorporate those natural resources concerns into the conservation district’s book of business.

2 – To encourage conservation districts to prioritize equity in the services they offer and in employment decisions.

3 – That the Commission and WACD organize annual diversity, equity, and inclusion seminars that are made available to all Conservation District Supervisors and Managers.

4 – That WACD and the Commission work with districts to make elections more public and to ensure that communities of color are engaged around elections.

5 – That the commission recruits and retains a diversity, equity, and inclusion (officer) coordinator/position that will work with the election’s officer to promote engagement of communities of color across the state and address the disparity gap around services and elections.

6 – That WACD asks conservation districts and the Washington State Conservation Commission to take actions to encourage more diversity in conservation district supervisor positions both elected and appointed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee developed recommendations for implementation over a three-year timeline to account for staff and organizational capacity:

Year 1

- A. WACD to compile, and make available to interested conservation districts, a list of resources and best practices for equity, community engagement, and outreach with underrepresented communities.
- B. WACD will develop a central repository where member conservation districts can access resources, tools, and best practices.
- C. WACD to engage with The State Office of Equity and learn what existing support WACD and conservation districts may be able to receive from the State.

Year 2

- D. WACD can work to identify and secure funding opportunities for community engagement and education staff for conservation districts.
- E. WACD to establish relationships with organizations representing underserved communities so that offers of services and employment are more welcome when shared.
- F. WACD to consider how to increase community involvement and inclusion in conservation district elections and work with the Conservation Commission and WACD Board of Directors to make recommendations for improvement.

Year 3

- G. WACD to conduct an organizational EDI assessment that addresses culture and structure with support from external consultants who use the assessment as a capacity building exercise. The assessment will include a report of recommendations of ways to improve the culture and reduce barriers for diverse employees/members to participate. The process will also train WACD employees in how to conduct similar assessments for conservation districts who are interested. WACD can then conduct EDI assessments for interested districts.

Additional recommendations that were not approved by the Committee at this time:

These recommendations were considered by the Committee but were not approved. They are included in this summary so that they may be considered at a later date.

- H. Underrepresented or underserved will be defined – all conservation districts will use a standard definition that can be applied uniquely by each individual district
- I. WACD to offer best practices in reducing bias in the hiring process, job application templates etc.
- J. WACD to define what it means to prioritize equity in the hiring process
- K. WACD can make connections with local, regional, and national job boards to increase applicant pool for local conservation districts when positions are open
- L. WACD to host a speaker series of people engaged in conservation EDI to share innovative and effective programs/initiatives
- M. WACD to host an annual meeting that highlights EDI or has an EDI track
- N. WACD to use existing communication channels (newsletters, Resource Hub on the website, etc.) to spotlight why EDI benefits conservation districts. Including links to movies, books, podcasts, and other relevant resources.
- O. WACD to conduct an annual survey of all membership on their specific needs as districts and their community's needs (or include this in an existing survey). WACD will then share this information back to members
- P. WACD to create “resource hubs” (potentially even a slack channel) where member conservation districts s can request information, capacity, resources etc. ***Joint purchasing? Could a Community Engagement employee be housed at WACD and serve all conservation districts who need additional support?
- Q. WACD to work with the Conservation Commission to conduct an elections assessment to identify barriers of engagement and develop recommendations for changing how elections are conducted to reduce barriers to participation
- R. WACD to help market open positions with statewide partners, including colleges, trade schools, job boards, city governments, chambers of commerce and other potential partners to spread the word.
- S. WACD and the Commission work with districts to make elections more public and to ensure that communities of color are engaged around elections and that supervisors engage in activities within communities of color that are not necessarily related to conservation to form strong connections

- T. WACD to identify additional resources to advance the work of the resolutions
- U. WACD develops a job description for the EDI position, based on conservation district input (survey) to ensure the position fulfills functions needed most by membership
- V. WACD develops a long-range strategic plan that explicitly weaves EDI into the ongoing work, to ensure sustainability and embed EDI into all facets of the organization
- W. The Committee includes a provision that funding will come from additional sources, rather than existing funding to support the recommendations put forth.
- X. WACD can host a quarterly meeting to explore best practices in community engagement and inclusion
- Y. WACD to share survey templates for community engagement that can be used by conservation districts in the resource library