



# Washington State Conservation Commission

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## Meeting Packet

*December 4, 2025*

*\*\*This meeting will be held virtually via Zoom.  
Options to participate in-person are available\**

*Spokane, Washington*

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### *Our Mission:*

*"To conserve natural resources on all lands in Washington,  
in collaboration with conservation districts and partners."*

## WSSC Business Meeting

Northern Quest Resort & Casino – Kalispel A&C  
100 N Hayford Rd Airway Heights, WA 99001

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## Time

Please note that the times listed below are estimated and may vary. Please visit the SCC website for the most up-to-date meeting information.

## Meeting accommodations

Persons with a disability needing an accommodation to participate in SCC public meetings should contact Lori Gonzalez at [lgonzalez@scc.wa.gov](mailto:lgonzalez@scc.wa.gov) or call 711 relay service. All accommodation requests should be received no later than Wednesday, November 19, 2025 to ensure preparations are appropriately made.

## Online Meeting Coordinates

To participate online, please click on [this link](#) to register. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting virtually. You may use your computer audio, or dial into the meeting using the information provided after logging in. Guests will be muted by the host upon login to allow for full discussion by Commissioners. Chat will be allowed between host and guests.

## Public Comment

Public comment will be allowed after each presentation prior to adopting an action item. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker. Once public comment session is closed, no further discussion will be allowed from the public on that specific topic.

*Agenda – Please note: All agenda items needing action will be listed under Tab 1.*

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
8:30 a.m.		<b>Call to order/Welcome/Introductions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Commissioner Roll Call</li><li>• Recognition of Newly Seated Commission Member</li><li>• Commissioner Introductions</li><li>• Guest Introductions</li><li>• Pledge of Allegiance</li><li>• Additions/Corrections to agenda items</li></ul>	Chair Cochran

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
8:45 a.m.		<b>Executive Director's Update</b>	Director Thompson
8:55 a.m.	1.	<b>Consent Agenda</b> <i>(Action items)</i>  Public comment will be allowed after each presentation prior to adopting action. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker. a) Draft September 18, 2025, Meeting Minutes b) Out of State Travel Approval • National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting – February 15-19, 2026	Chair Cochran Director Thompson
9:00 a.m.	1.	<b>Commission Operations</b> <i>(Action item)</i>  Public comment will be allowed after each presentation prior to adopting action. Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.  c) Nomination of Chair and Vice-Chair	Comm. Beeler
9:05 a.m.		<b>District Operations</b> <i>(Action item)</i>  d) Kitsap Conservation District Election Certification	Mike Baden
9:10 a.m.	2.	<b>Budget and Finance</b> <i>(Information Only)</i> a) Ombuds Workgroup Update	Sarah Groth / Jessica Wilson
	2.	<b>District Operations</b> <i>(Information Only)</i> b) District Operations and Regional Manager Report	<i>Packet item only</i>
9:25 a.m.	2.	<b>Washington Soil Health Initiative (WaSHI) Presentation</b> c) <i>Presented by:</i> • Commissioner Dani Gelardi, WA Department of Agriculture • Karen Hills, WA State Conservation Commission	

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
9:45 a.m.		<b>Partner Updates</b> <i>(Information Only)</i>	
		d) Department of Natural Resources ( <b>DNR</b> )	<i>Packet item only</i>
		e) Department of Fish and Wildlife ( <b>WDFW</b> )	<i>Packet item only</i>
		f) National Association of Conservation Districts ( <b>NACD</b> )	<i>Packet item only</i>
		g) WA Association of Conservation Districts ( <b>WACD</b> )	<i>Packet item only</i>
		h) WA Association of District Employees ( <b>WADE</b> )	Craig Nelson / Sarah Moorehead
9:50 a.m.		<b>BREAK – 10 minutes</b>	
10:00 a.m.		<b>Executive Session:</b> End of Year Performance Review <i>Per RCW 42.30.220 (g)... to review the performance of a public employee.</i>	Commission Members/ Director Thompson
10:45 a.m.		<b>Reconvene from Executive Session</b>	Chair Cochran
10:50 a.m.		<b>Closing remarks - Adjourn</b>	Chair Cochran
11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.		<b>Commissioner Parliamentary Procedure Training</b>	
		<i>A Parliamentary Procedure Training, provided by Jurassic Parliament, will be held for Commission members immediately following the public meeting. Guests are welcome to remain and observe; however, participation in the training is limited to Commissioners only. Lunch will be provided.</i>	

# TAB 1

## Regular Business Meeting ~

The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission/SCC) met virtually as well as in-person on Thursday, September 18, 2025, in Stevens County, Washington. Chair Larry Cochran called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

**Note:** All meeting materials can be found on our [meetings webpage](#). You will find the meeting packet with background information, presentations and past meeting information.

### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

**Larry Cochran**, Chair, Elected east region  
**Cherie Kearney**, Vice-chair, Governor Appointee  
**Amy McKay**, Washington Association of Conservation Districts  
**Brook Beeler**, Department of Ecology  
**Dani Gelardi**, Department of Agriculture  
**Dean Longrie**, Elected west region (online)  
**Jim Kropf**, Washington State University (online)  
**Katie Rose Allen**, Department of Natural Resources (online)  
**Wade Troutman**, Elected central region

### COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT

**James Thompson**, Executive Director  
**Alicia McClendon**, Administrative Assistant  
**Allisa Carlson**, Regional Manager  
**Jessica Wilson**, Chief Engagement Officer  
**Kate Delavan**, Policy Director  
**Lori Gonzalez**, Executive Assistant  
**Sarah Wilcox**, Communications  
**Shana Joy**, Deputy Director of District Operations and Programs

Additional staff are listed in the attachments.

A quorum was present.

### PARTNERS REPRESENTED

**Angie Reseland**, Dept of Fish and Wildlife (online)  
**Roylene Comes at Night**, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
**Sarah Moorehead**, WA Association of District Employees  
**Heather Wendt**, WA Association of Conservation Districts

All other guests are listed in the following attachments:

**Attachment A** – online registration/attendance sheet

**Attachment B** – in-person sign-in sheet

# ACTION MINUTES TAKEN

The meeting was opened with Commissioner roll call taken by Lori Gonzalez. A quorum was present. Following roll call, introductions were made for guests attending both in person and online.

Chair Cochran asked for any additions or corrections to the agenda; none were offered.

## CONSENT AGENDA

### *Draft July 17, 2025, Business Meeting Minutes*

Motion by Commissioner Troutman to approve the July 17, 2025, draft meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner McKay.  
Motion carried.

## COMMISSION OPERATIONS

### *2026 Commission Meeting Locations*

Motion by Commissioner McKay to approve the 2026 Commission meeting locations. Seconded by Commissioner Gelardi.  
Motion carried.

### *Voluntary Stewardship Program Statewide Advisory Committee Appointment*

Motion by Commissioner Kearney to appoint Brian Muegge to a two-year term to the Statewide Advisory Committee, effective immediately. Seconded by Commissioner Longrie.  
Motion carried.

## PROGRAMS

### *Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration & Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI) – Guideline Adoption*

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to adopt the Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration & Resiliency Initiative (WSRRI) Program Guidelines as final, effective September 18, 2025. Seconded by Commissioner McKay.  
Motion carried.

### *Farmland Protection & Land Access (FPLA) Grant Authorization*

Motion by Commissioner Troutman to accept the Farmland Protection & Land Access (FPLA) Work Group’s recommendation regarding Great Peninsula Conservancy’s Petersen Farm application.

The Conservation Commission approves up to \$780,000 in FPLA funding for the Great Peninsula Conservancy to acquire an agricultural conservation easement on the 142-acre Petersen Farm property located in Kitsap County.

The Conservation Commission authorizes its Executive Director to sign the conservation easement as a third-party beneficiary. Seconded by Commissioner Gelardi.  
Motion carried.

## DISTRICT OPERATIONS

### ***Columbia Basin Conservation District Mid-term Supervisor Appointment***

Motion by Commissioner Troutman to appoint Richard Leitz to the Columbia Basin Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Seconded by Commissioner Beeler.

Motion carried.

Chair Cochran adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.





# Washington State Conservation Commission

ATTACHMENT A

## Please Sign In

Conservation Commission Business Meeting  
Thursday, September 18, 2025

	NAME	ENTITY/DISTRICT
1.	Lori Gonzalez	SCC
2.	Alicia McClendon	SCC
3.	Brooke Betts	SCC
4.	Alexis Kearney	SCC
5.	Heather Wender	WACD
6.	Dani Gelardi	WSDA
7.	Jessica Wilson	SCC
8.	Jeff Schibbel	LCAD
9.	Amy McKay	WACD/SCC
10.	Dave Hedrick	Ferry CD
11.	Larry Cochran	WSCC
12.	Dean Hellie	Stevens SCCD
13.	Mike Pfeest	SCC
14.	Tom Christen	WDFW
15.		

16. Wade Troutman Com.
17. Chris Frouell SCCD
18. Sarah Wilcox See
19. Jennifer Bore Palouse CD
20. Allisa Carlson SCC
21. James Thompson See
22. Brook Beeler ELY
23. Roylene Comes at Night NRCS
24. Mrs. Troutman
25. Mike Baden See
- 26.
- 27.
- 28.
- 29.
- 30.
- 31.
- 32.
- 33.
- 34.

## Zoom Registration Report

### September 18, 2025 State Conservation Commission Business Meeting

	First Name	Last Name		First Name	Last Name
1	Alan	Chapman	37	Nick	Vira
2	Alison	Crowley	38	Paige	DeChambeau
3	Allen	Lebovitz	39	Paul	D'Agnolo
4	Amy	Martin	40	Ryan	Williams
5	Angie	Reseland	41	Ryan	Baye
6	Anna	Lael	42	Sam	Harpur
7	Becca	Hebron	43	Sarah	Wilcox
8	B'Elanna	Rhodehamel	44	Sarah	Moorehead
9	Bill	Eller	45	SCC	Presentation
10	Brad	Riehle	46	stuart	crane
11	Courtney	Woods	47	Tami	Stubbs
12	Daryl	Williams	48	Victoria	Fischella
13	Dean	Longrie	49	Zorah	Oppenheimer
14	Emmett	Wild			
15	Evan	Bauder			
16	Hilary	Aten			
17	Jan	Thomas			
18	Janet	Gorrell			
19	Jean	Fike			
20	Jennifer	Coe			
21	Jim	Kropf			
22	Jodi	Prout			
23	Joe	Holtrop			
24	Jon	Culp			
25	Josh	Giuntoli			
26	Josh	Larsen			
27	Joy	Garitone			
28	Kara	Kaelber			
29	Karen	Hills			
30	Karla	Heinitz			
31	Kate	Delavan			
32	Katie Rose	Allen			
33	Kris	Neely			
34	Lori	Gonzalez			
35	Megan	Stewart			
36	Nick	Peak			



# Washington State Conservation Commission

December 4, 2025

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members

**FROM:** James Thompson, Executive Director

**SUBJECT:** Out of State Travel Approval

Action Item

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Informational Item

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## Summary:

The SCC executive director as well as commissioners who are non-state agency representatives must request prior commission board approval to attend all out of state meetings and conferences.

Below for commissioner review and consideration to approve is a request for upcoming out-of-state travel.

**Event Name:** National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) 80<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
([NACD Website](#))

**Dates:** February 14-19, 2026 (dates include travel days)

**Location:** San Antonio, Texas

**Registration cost:** \$499 / per person– Early bird rate on or before 12/19/2025

**Room rate:** \$279/ per night + taxes and fees

**Flight (estimate):** \$336.60 round trip

## Requested Action:

Approval for the SCC executive director and a commission member to travel to San Antonio, Texas for the National Association of Conservation District's (NACD) 80<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, February 14-19 2026.

## Staff Contact:

James Thompson, Executive Director / [jthompson@scc.wa.gov](mailto:jthompson@scc.wa.gov)

Lori Gonzalez, Executive Assistant / [lgonzalez@scc.wa.gov](mailto:lgonzalez@scc.wa.gov)



# Washington State Conservation Commission

December 4, 2025

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members  
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

**FROM:** SCC Commissioner Nomination Committee

**SUBJECT:** Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

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Action Item

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Informational Item

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## Summary:

At the September 2025 Commission meeting, the Commission formed a Nomination Committee to recommend candidates for the positions of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, in accordance with SCC Policy 21-07 *Governance: Commissioner Expectations*.

The Nomination Committee has since met and will provide its recommendations for the next Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson at this meeting. Policy 21-07 specifies the procedures for nomination and election of officers, including eligibility criteria and terms of service.

A copy of Policy 21-07 is followed by this memo.

SCC Policy 21-07 *Governance: Commissioner Expectations* outlines the process for electing Commission leadership.

Per page 4 of the policy:

- A nominating committee of three Commissioners is formed annually at the September regular Commission meeting for the purpose of recommending candidates for Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.
- The nominating committee presents its recommendations at the next regular meeting for Commission action.
- Only the three elected, two appointed, and the ex-officio member representing Washington State University (WSU) are eligible to serve as Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson.
- Ex-officio members representing the Departments of Ecology, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and WACD are ineligible to serve in these roles.

- The term of office for both Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson is one year, with a maximum of two consecutive terms in each role.

The Nomination Committee has completed its work and will present their recommendation at this meeting for consideration by the full Commission.

#### Requested Action:

The Commission is requested to take action on the Nomination Committee's recommendation and elect the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for a one-year term beginning at the next regular Commission meeting, consistent with SCC Policy 21-07.

#### Contact:

Commissioner Brook Beeler [brook.beeler@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:brook.beeler@ecy.wa.gov)



# Washington State Conservation Commission

<b>Policy #</b>	21-07 Governance and Commissioner Expectations
<b>Applies to:</b>	WSCC Commissioners
<b>Effective Date:</b>	Board approved on December 2, 2021

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish agency governance policy and commitments, provide additional clarity and establish standards of behavior and expectations for service of the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) Board of Commissioners.

## BACKGROUND

The WSCC is established and authorized under RCW 89.08. Several specific sections of this RCW guide and authorize the policies established herein:

### RCW 89.08.030

“The commission shall consist of ten members, five of whom are ex officio. Two members shall be appointed by the governor, one of whom shall be a landowner or operator of a farm. At least two of the three elected members shall be landowners or operators of a farm and shall be elected as herein provided. The appointed members shall serve for a term of four years.

The three elected members shall be elected for three-year terms, one shall be elected each year by the district supervisors at their annual statewide meeting. One of the members shall reside in eastern Washington, one in central Washington and one in western Washington, the specific boundaries to be determined by district supervisors.

The director of the department of ecology, the director of the department of agriculture, the commissioner of public lands, the president of the Washington association of conservation districts, and the dean of the college of agriculture at Washington State University shall be ex officio members of the commission. An ex officio member of the commission shall hold office so long as he or she retains the office by virtue of which he or she is a member of the commission. Ex officio members may delegate their authority.

The commission may invite appropriate officers of cooperating organizations, state and federal agencies to serve as advisers to the conservation commission.”



**RCW 89.08.050**

“It shall have authority to delegate to its chairman, to one or more of its members, to one or more agents or employees such duties and powers as it deems proper...”

“The commission shall organize annually and select a chairman from among its members, who shall serve for one year from the date of his selection...”

## POLICY

### Governance

#### Board of Commissioners Purpose

The Board of Commissioners represents, leads, and serves the agency and holds itself accountable to it by committing to act in the agency’s best interests and by ensuring that all Board and agency action is consistent with law and the agency’s policies. The Board’s purpose is to assure that the agency achieves its goals and that it operates according to its values.

The Board and its Commissioners are committed to effectively governing the agency, testing all of its decisions, maintaining Commissioner relationships with each other, evaluating the Executive Director, training new Commissioners, working with staff and subcontractors and serving its constituents.

#### Governing Commitments

The Board will govern lawfully, encourage full exploration of diverse viewpoints; act with integrity as ethical leaders, focus on governance matters rather than administrative issues; observe clear separation of Board and Executive Director roles, make all official decisions by formal vote of the Board; and govern with long-term vision.

The Board will function as a single unit. The opinions and personal strengths of individual Commissioners will be used to the Board’s best advantage, but the Board faithfully will make decisions as a group, by formal vote. No officer, individual, or committee of the Board will be permitted to limit the Board’s performance or prevent the Board from fulfilling its commitments.

The Board is responsible for its own performance and commits itself to continuous improvement. The Board will assure that its Commissioners are provided with training and professional support necessary to govern effectively, including ethics training. After attending conferences or events, Commissioners will report back to the Board at the next regular meeting about what they have learned.

The Board will carry out a summative self-assessment with full, honest and timely participation by all Commissioners. The assessment will include evaluation of the Board as a whole.



## Board Job Description

The Board's job is to represent, lead and serve the agency and to govern by establishing expectations for organizational results, expectations for quality operational performance, and monitoring actual performance against those expectations. The Board will:

- Set agency external-facing policy
- Evaluate Board performance.
- Hire the Executive Director and evaluate their performance.
- Adopt and keep current a long range strategic plan and monitor performance against the plan.
- Review and accept the periodic report of the State Auditor.
- Adopt and monitor implementation of biennial operating budgets.
- Review and approve biennial and supplemental budget requests, and new legislation to the Governor and state legislature.
- Appoint two conservation district supervisors to each conservation district board.
- Work with the Office of the Attorney General to support the WSCC in its work.
- Support implementation of the Conservation Accountability and Performance Program
- Set election rules for conservation district elections (Chapter 135-110 WAC)

## Board Officers

The officers of the Board of Commissioners (Board) are those listed in this policy. Their duties are those assigned by this policy, and others required by law.

## Chair

The Chair provides leadership to the Board of Commissioners, ensures the faithful execution of the Commission's processes, exercises interpretive responsibilities consistent with the spirit and intent of the Commission's policies, and normally serves as the Board of Commissioners' spokesperson. The Chair has the following specific authorities and duties:

- Monitor Commissioner actions to assure that they are consistent with the Board's own rules and policies:
  - Chair Commission meetings using the authority normally vested in the Chair as described in Robert's Rules of Order;
  - Conduct and monitor Commission meeting deliberations to assure that Board discussion and attention are focused on Board issues, as defined in Board policy;
  - Assure that Commission meeting discussions are productive, efficient, orderly, and respectful;
  - Lead the Commission's annual performance evaluation of the Executive Director;
  - Execute all documents authorized by the Commission, except as otherwise provided by law or delegation of authority;
  - Appoint members of all Commission committees and sub-committees with the ratification of the full Commission.
  - Represent the Board as its official spokesperson about issues or topics decided by the full Board.

## **Vice-Chair**

The Vice-Chair serves in the absence or inability of the Chair to perform the specific authorities and duties of the Chair.

## **Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson (replaces policy no. 05-02)**

A nominating committee will be formed for the purpose of recommending candidates for the office of chairperson and vice chairperson for action by the governing body at the December Commission Meeting.

The nominating committee will include members of the Commission Board and partners. The term of office for the chairperson(s) and vice chairperson(s) shall be one year, with a maximum of two consecutive terms per role.

Only the three elected, two appointed, and ex-officio member representing Washington State University (WSU) shall be eligible for the office of chairperson or vice chairperson. Ex-officio members representing the regulatory Departments of Ecology, Agriculture, Natural Resources and WACD shall be ineligible to serve as chairperson or vice chairperson.

## **PROCEDURE**

A nominating committee of 3 Commissioners will be formed annually by the Board at the September regular Commission meeting for the purpose of recommending candidates for the offices of chairperson and vice chairperson.

At the next regular meeting following the September meeting, the nominating committee shall present recommendations to the full Commission board and request action. While the recommendation of the nominating committee is not binding on the full Commission board, it will be carefully considered prior to board action.

The newly elected chairperson and vice chairperson will begin service at the next regular or special meeting of the Conservation Commission, typically occurring in January of the following year.

## **Executive Committee (replaces policy no. 05-03)**

### **Purpose and Structure**

The purpose of the Executive Committee is to provide feedback and guidance, upon request and as appropriate, to the Executive Director between regular meetings of the full Commission Board and to make any decisions as are formally delegated to the Executive Committee by the full Commission Board. The chairperson and vice chairperson, will collectively be called the Executive Committee of the Commission. The Executive Committee shall serve as a standing committee of the full Commission Board with no expiration.

## Duties

Duties of the Executive Committee may include but are not limited to:

- Provide feedback and informal guidance, upon request and as appropriate, to the Executive Director on agency matters between regular Commission meetings,
- Remain informed of legislative developments and provide feedback to SCC staff on pending legislation that may be contentious and urgent,
- Review and provide input into draft agendas for commission meetings

Additional responsibilities of the Executive Committee may also be assigned by action of the Commission. The Executive Committee shall report out its activities, as appropriate, to the full Commission board at the next regular Commission meeting.

## Committees or Sub-Committees

The Board may create committees or sub-committees if they are deemed helpful to assist the Board in the performance of its responsibilities. If committees are established, they will be used exclusively to support the work of the Board at the direction of the Board.

- Committees will not be used to direct, advise, assist, or oversee the staff. Committees will have no authority over staff and may exercise demands on staff time and organizational resources only to the extent authorized by the full Board and Executive Director.
- Committees will customarily prepare recommendations for consideration by the full Board.
- Committees may not speak or act for the Board unless specifically authorized to do so. The responsibilities and authority of all committees are carefully stated in writing to assure that committees fully understand their duties and extent of authority, and to assure that committee work will not usurp or conflict with the Board's own authority or conflict with authority delegated to the Executive Director.
- All Board committees are considered to be ad hoc, or temporary, unless specifically authorized by the full Board as a standing committee. The date for the termination of each committee is listed for each committee. Committees may be renewed or reauthorized upon their expiration, but unless the Board acts to renew the committee's existence it shall cease to exist upon the date specific.
- Format for Board Committees will follow:
  - Name
  - Purpose and Charge
  - Membership
  - Reporting Schedule
  - Term
  - Authority over Resources

## **Advisors to the Board of Commissioners (replaces policy no. 05-07)**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Forest Service are recognized as an important contributor to Conservation Commission meetings. Even though they are not a regular member of the Commission, the following policy shall serve as a guide for their participation in the meetings.

- They may attend all meetings and executive sessions by invitation.
- They may not make motions or vote.
- They may be recognized by the chairman and enter discussion on any subject in the same manner as any regular Commission member.

Additional short-term or topic-specific advisors may be invited to participate in Commission meetings, agency initiatives or projects at any time.

## **Commissioner Expectations**

### **Attendance and Engagement**

Commissioners will make every effort to attend all regular and special meetings of the WSCC. To ensure that the WSCC's meetings are conducted with maximum effectiveness and efficiency, Commissioners will spend such time as may be needed in advance of the meetings to review meeting materials, interact with the agency, organization, or region of conservation districts represented as may be needed on topics appearing on each agenda in preparation for and to enable fully engaged participation in each meeting.

If a Commissioner must be absent for a meeting, the Commissioner is expected to notify the Chairperson and Executive Director as soon as possible. A substitute delegate may participate on behalf of ex-officio Commissioners only. Any substitutes are expected to adhere to and uphold all policies, procedures, and expectations of the WSCC and the Commissioner for which they are acting as a substitute. Every effort will be made to provide timely meeting materials and information to identified substitutes but it is the primary responsibility of the appointed Commissioner to ensure the substitute is fully prepared to attend the meeting.

### **Code of Conduct**

The Commissioners will conduct themselves lawfully, with integrity and high ethical standards, in order to model the behaviors expected of staff and to build constituent confidence and credibility. The Commission will conduct its official business with social and fiduciary responsibility that encourages public trust. Commissioners will maintain awareness of, abide by and uphold all WSCC policies and procedures.

To build trust among Commissioners and to ensure an environment conducive to effective governance, Commissioners will:

- Communicate openly and respectfully with one another, agency staff, and the public;
- Listen to understand one another, staff, and the public;
- Support the Chair's efforts to facilitate an orderly meeting;

- Focus on issues rather than personalities;
- Exercise honesty in all written and interpersonal interaction, never intentionally misleading or misinforming each other;
- Make every reasonable effort to protect the integrity and promote the positive image of the organization and one another;
- Maintain confidentiality appropriate to sensitive issues and information that otherwise may tend to compromise the integrity or legal standing of the Commission, especially those matters discussed in executive session.

Commissioners will not attempt to exercise individual authority over the agency or staff.

- Commissioners will not attempt to assume personal responsibility for resolving operational problems or complaints;
- Commissioners will not personally direct any part of the operational organization;
- Commissioners will respect decisions of the Board and will not undermine those decisions;
- Commissioners will not publicly express individual negative judgments about Executive Director or staff performance. Any such judgments will be expressed in executive session;
- Commissioners will refer any requests for access to the agency's records to the SCC Public Records Officer;
- Commissioners will serve the interests of the entire organization. Commissioners recognize this responsibility to the whole to be greater than:
  - any other responsibility a Commissioner may have as a member; and
  - ties based upon membership on other boards or staffs.

## Communication and Representation

Each Commissioner will strive to serve as a communication conduit with the agency, organization, group, or region of conservation districts represented. Each Commissioner should bring relevant news from their constituents to the WSCC in a timely manner and carry WSCC news and information back to their constituents as well.

## Representing the Commission

Only the designated spokesperson(s) for the agency will provide formal or informal comments to the press or media on behalf of the agency or Board. In the circumstance where Commissioners participate in meetings or events where it may not be clear from which perspective or which organization they are representing, all Commissioners will make it very clear that while they do serve as a Commissioner, they are not speaking on behalf of, or representing the agency unless formally designated to do so by the Chair or Executive Director. Commissioners may be involved in numerous aspects of natural resource conservation in roles outside of their service as a Commissioner; it is essential that when speaking as a Commissioner to ensure that the policies and formal positions adopted by the full Board and agency are represented accurately and are not undermined.

## Ethics and Conflict of Interest (incorporates language from SCC policy no. 13-02)

The Ethics in Public Service Act, RCW 42.52 applies to all state employees and officers. All Commissioners are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Ethics Act (RCW 42.52) and rules (WAC 292-110), applicable agency policies and procedures, and for making choices that exemplify an adherence to the highest ethical standards. Detailed information on issues related to state ethics, including interpretations and clarifying examples of the Ethics Act and rules are available at the Executive Ethics Board's website [www.ethics.wa.gov](http://www.ethics.wa.gov).

Commissioners are expected to avoid conflicts of interest involving all matters considered by the Board. A conflict of interest exists when a Commissioner is confronted with an issue in which the Commissioner has, or appears to have, a personal or financial interest or an issue of circumstance that could render the Commissioner unable to remain objective and focus upon the agency's interest.

To assure that there is no perception of impropriety or unethical behavior, Commissioners will recuse themselves from any discussion or decision which directly involves or affects them. A Commissioner will recuse him/herself by notifying the Chair of the potential conflict of interest and leave the room when the issue in conflict is voted upon.

If a Commissioner does not recuse him/herself when it may be improper for them to participate in discussion or decisions, other Commissioners or the Executive Director, have the right and obligation to request that the Commissioner recuse him/herself.

Commissioners should notify the Chairperson and Executive Director of any actual or potential violations of this policy. When in doubt, Commissioners should consult with the designated Ethics Advisor (Executive Director) or the Human Resources Office.

### Process for Addressing Violations by Commissioners

The Board and each of its Commissioners are committed to faithful compliance with the provisions of the Board's policies. The Board recognizes that failure to deal with deliberate or continuing violations of its policies risks the loss of confidence in the Board's ability to govern effectively. Therefore, if the Board determines that a Commissioner's violation of law, regulation, or policy requires it the Board can address the issue and may use the following process with every attempt made to resolve the issue at the lowest possible level:

1. Conversation in a private setting between the offending Commissioner and the Chairperson or other individual Commissioner;
  - a. If the Chair's compliance is in question, the Vice-chair will be notified.
2. Discussion in an executive session between the offending Commissioner and the full Board if in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.
3. Removal by the Board from any leadership or committee positions to which the offending Commissioner has been appointed or elected.
4. Censure of the offending Commissioner as a means of separating the Board's focus and intent from those of the offending Commissioner.
5. Removal from the Board. For ex-officio Commissioners, a request may be made to the agency or organization that has appointed the Commissioner in question to appoint

another representative for their agency or organization. For Governor appointed Commissioners, a request may be made to the Office of the Governor to consider making a new appointment.

## **Ethics Violations**

The Executive Director is designated as the agency's Ethics Advisor who coordinates and manages the agency's ethics program. The Executive Director may also appoint another member of staff to serve as the Ethics Advisor. The Ethics Advisor is the agency's liaison to the Washington State Executive Ethics Board. The Ethics Advisor may:

- a. Assess the application of conflict of interest laws and regulations to the information reported and counsel those Commissioners with regard to resolving actual or potential conflicts of interests or appearances.
- b. Counsel Commissioners concerning ethics standards and programs.
- c. Assist Commissioners in understanding and implementing agency ethics programs.

The Executive Ethics Board has the authority and responsibility for investigating alleged violation(s) of the Ethics Act. Anyone may file an ethics complaint against a state employee or officer. Complaint forms are available on the Executive Ethics Board's website. Complaints may be filed anonymously or the complainant may choose to remain confidential. Ethics complaints may be filed directly with this Board at the following website: <https://ethics.wa.gov/online-complaint-form>.

## **Decision Making**

### **Board Decision Making**

The Board will make decisions:

- Through a formal vote of a quorum of the Board in an open and public meeting.
- After seeking out the most complete and accurate information and perspectives from all sides of a situation.
- After providing opportunity for and consideration of public comment.

Action items brought to the Board, to the greatest extent possible, will be initially introduced at an open and public meeting. If the Board chooses to act, action would occur at the next or a future open and public meeting.

### **Board and Executive Director Relationship**

The Executive Director is the Board's primary contact with Commission staff. The Board does not work directly with individual staff members on the operations of the organization. The Executive Director may direct staff to communicate with Commissioners as needed.

The Board will direct the Executive Director only through official decisions of a quorum of the full Board.

- The Board will make decisions by formal, recorded vote in order to avoid any disclarity about whether direction has been given.
- The Executive Director is neither obligated nor expected to follow the directions or instructions of individual Commissioners or committees unless the Board has specifically delegated such exercise of authority.
- Should the Executive Director determine that an information request received from an individual Commissioner or a committee requires a material amount of staff time or is unreasonable, the Executive Director is expected to ask that the committee or the Commissioner refer such requests to the full Board for authorization.

### Staff Accountability

The Executive Director is responsible for all matters related to the day-to-day operations of the agency, within the values expressed by the Board in policy. All staff members are considered to report directly or indirectly to the Executive Director.

- The Board will never give direction to any contractor hired by the Executive Director regarding a contract with the Executive Director or to any employee other than the Executive Director.
- The Board will not participate in decisions or actions involving the hiring, evaluating, compensation, disciplining or dismissal of any contractor hired by the Executive Director or any employee other than the Executive Director.

### Authority of the Executive Director

The Board will provide direction to the Executive Director through written policies and/or formal vote of the full Board. The Executive Director is authorized to establish any administration policies or procedures, make any decisions, establish any practices and develop any activities that the Executive Director deems appropriate to achieve the work of the agency. The Executive Director is not expected to seek Board approval or authority for any decision falling within the Executive Director's area of delegated authority.





# Washington State Conservation Commission

December 4, 2025

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members  
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

**FROM:** Jean Fike, Puget Sound Regional Manager

**SUBJECT:** Kitsap CD Repeat Election

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Action Item

☒

Informational Item

☐

## Summary:

Kitsap Conservation District's regular 2025 election was not certified. A new election was held on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and staff are now requesting the results be certified.

## Requested Action:

Certify Kitsap Conservation District November 2025 election.

## Background and Discussion:

Per RCW 89.08 Conservation District elections must be held in the first three months of the calendar year. Elections held during that time are normally certified at the May commission meeting.

During Kitsap Conservation District's regular 2025 election, a complaint was received. An investigation was conducted which found noncompliance. At the May 2025 commission meeting, the commissioners voted not to certify the election, instructed the district to pursue legal authorization to re-run their election outside of the timeframe set in RCW 89.08 and repeat the election.

Having gained authorization from Kitsap Superior Court to do so, Kitsap CD held an election on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025. All information available indicates the election was properly conducted and no complaints have been received.

A total of 35 votes were cast. Two were disqualified as they selected the write-in box but did not write a candidate name. The remaining 33 votes were cast for the only candidate on the ballot, Mary Sharon McClure. The staff recommendation is to certify this election.

# TAB 2



# Washington State Conservation Commission

December 4, 2025

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members  
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

**FROM:** Sarah Groth, Chief Financial Officer  
Jessica Wilson, Chief Engagement Officer

**SUBJECT:** Ombuds Workgroup Update

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Action Item

☐

Informational Item

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## Summary:

Conservation Districts have asked SCC to focus on improvements to the usability of the Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual for the last three years. Relatedly, CDs have expressed frustration about the current vouchering process and inconsistencies in this process between programs. SCC is working on two separate projects to address these intertwined concerns- the Ombuds Working Group and the Program Process Improvement project. The Ombuds Working Group, which this memo specifically addresses, is narrowly scoped to improve the Grants Manual. In our two previous facilitated meetings with CD managers and finance professionals, we have documented a variety of opportunities for ways to improve SCC's processes. This includes identified opportunities to expand CDs knowledge and training of SCC's Manual together with basic accounting standards, internal controls, separation of duties, and best practices for good governance.

## Background and Discussion:

Over the past five years, SCC has received increased funding for existing programs as well as new programs. These additional investments and new programs have changed our business needs, and our policies and procedures have not kept pace with all the changes.

SCC fiscal staff, Regional Managers, and SCC leadership will continue meeting with the Ombuds Working Group at a minimum of quarterly from now until January 2027 when we anticipate bringing the 27-29 proposed manual to commissioners for approval to go out for public comment.

### Next Steps:

We have worked to build a comprehensive list of comments and feedback received from two surveys, the first facilitated meeting in February, and public comment from the 25-27 Manual. This list was sorted into topic areas, we are working to add detail about whether these items were a policy, procedure, state law, or something else. This list was shared for concurrence with the Ombuds Working Group members in November and will be going out to the full conservation district community in advance of the December commission meeting.

The next step for the Ombuds Group is to determine what items to prioritize for work, and what the ideal structure to accomplish the work will be between now and our goal of January 2027.

### Staff Contact:

*Sarah Groth* / [sgroth@scc.wa.gov](mailto:sgroth@scc.wa.gov)

*Jessica Wilson* / [jwilson@scc.wa.gov](mailto:jwilson@scc.wa.gov)

December 4, 2025

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members  
James Thompson, Executive Director

**FROM:** Shana Joy, Deputy Director of Operations and Programs  
Mike Baden, NE & NC Regional Manager

**SUBJECT:** District Operations and Regional Managers Report

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Action Item	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informational Item	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Report Summary:

Regional Managers (RMs) offer this report of recent activities and support provided to conservation districts in various aspects of district operations, Commission operations assistance, and program administration support.

### *District Operations*

Conservation district operations encompass a wide range of activities necessary for legal compliance and efficient management, many of which are outlined in the [Conservation Accountability and Performance Program \(CAPP\)](#).

Regional Managers have provided substantial support to Conservation Districts (CDs) in onboarding and initiating grant activities for the new biennium. This support has included timely reminders, assistance with questions and issue resolution, and guidance on preparing addenda and amendments.

Regional Managers have supported CDs in preparing for their upcoming elections. Election forms and the elections calculator have been updated, the mandatory elections training was held on September 25, and reminder communications are being sent to districts.

Throughout the late summer and fall, RMs have conducted field visits with CDs to complete implementation monitoring for finished projects. They also continue to provide orientation for new supervisors.

The Regional Manager team collaborated with MRSC and WACD to organize training sessions for the WACD Annual Meeting. Planned topics include the Open Public Meetings Act, Public Records requirements, and the Municipal Ethics Act.

Regional Managers continue to provide ongoing support to districts by offering guidance, resources, and assistance with day-to-day operational matters. This includes troubleshooting and problem-solving in areas such as financial management, risk management, human resources, governance, and board dynamics.

### ***Commission Operations & Program Administration***

Regional Managers have been supporting SCC finance and program staff as new biennium funding is awarded. The RM Team extends its appreciation to the fiscal staff for their diligence, responsiveness, and collaboration in addressing challenges during this busy period.

Regional managers participated in September's joint SCC/Conservation District Ombuds Working Group to continue discussions regarding improvements to the SCC Grants Manual. The group identified items for inclusion in the next update by January 2027. Regional managers will continue to be involved as items are categorized, shared with the broader CD community for concurrence, and prioritized for the Grants Manual improvement project.

### ***Partnerships & Partnering Assistance***

The Regional Manager team provides ongoing assistance with partnering, or participated in partner and relationship building efforts, with individual CDs, WADE, PSCD Caucus, Center for Technical Development, WACD, DNR, Ecology, DFW, NACD, Washington Association of Land Trusts, State Auditor's Office, RCO, Department of Veterans Affairs, WA Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, Washington Conservation Society, Arid Lands Initiative, and Integrated Pest Management Workgroup.

Allisa Carlson has been working closely with WDFW to develop a solicitation for wildlife-friendly fencing and habitat restoration projects. The solicitation opened on September 24 and closed on October 17. Twenty-five fencing and 12 habitat restoration proposals were received, including several submitted by conservation districts. Review committees have convened, and the WSRRI steering committee will provide final approval to advance projects for funding by the end of the month.

Regional Managers have been collaborating with fiscal staff and NRCS to develop new contribution agreements for task orders and funding for a shared training coordinator. These agreements have been signed and are in effect. The task order agreements focus on the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA). CRP support for NRCS continues to be a high priority and represents a significant workload, particularly in Eastern Washington, as it ensures the continuation of producer contracts for this vital conservation program. The CTA task orders are broader in scope, enabling Conservation Districts to assist NRCS with a range of priority activities related to Farm Bill programs. Funding for a training coordinator, included as part of the CTA agreement, will support the Center for Technical Development in partnering with NRCS to identify, develop, and deliver technical training resources and events for CD staff. Strengthening training opportunities remains a critical need across the state. Many task related to these agreements are currently on hold due to the federal shutdown.

SCC participation and partnership with the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) is ongoing. Mike Baden and Allisa Carlson attended the NASCA Annual Meeting in Fort Worth from October 27-30. Allisa shared a presentation on the SCC District Digest to over 60 fellow

field staff from across the country. Shana Joy is representing the Pacific Region on the NASCA Policy Committee. Mike Baden serves as the Pacific Region Director on the NASCA Board.

## ***Chehalis Basin***

Josh Giuntoli, SW RM, represents the Executive Director of the Commission as ex-officio member of the Chehalis Basin Board (CBB).

On November 20, the Department of Ecology is set to release the Draft SEPA EIS on the proposed Flood Retention Expandable (FRE) facility proposed by the Chehalis River Basin Flood Control Zone District. A public comment period will run for 75 days, and a Final SEPA EIS is expected to be completed by early 2026; however, this is subject to change based on the public comment period outcomes.

The Office of Chehalis Basin (OCB) recently held a rolling online open house and two open house events in Chehalis and Montesano to provide updates and presentations of the Board's work in developing a long-term strategy. In addition, over the summer, OCB staff conducted extensive outreach with local governments, stakeholders, community events and attended Mason CD, Grays Harbor CD, Thurston CD, and Lewis CD board meetings for a briefing.

There remain critical issues ahead for the voting members of the board through 2026, including:

- How much should be invested in aquatic restoration for the next 30+ years?
- Are large-scale structural flood option(s) needed for the upper basin, such as a flow-through dam near Pe Ell, a system of local levees and floodwalls in and around Chehalis and Centralia, or some combination of both?
- What is the best pathway for the Skookumchuck Dam going forward?

## ***Programs***

RM's are currently in the lead role for the following programs:

- Implementation
- Shellfish
- Natural Resource Investments (NRI)
- Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resilience Initiative (WSRRI)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- NRCS Task Orders
- Professional Engineering
- Livestock Technical Assistance

SCC staff continues to coordinate with CDs and partners every other month. These are opportunities to share updates and information, identify possible issues, and generally stay connected.



# Washington State Conservation Commission

December 4, 2025

**TO:** Conservation Commission Members  
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

**FROM:** Karen Hills, Sustainable Farms and Fields Program Manager  
Dani Gelardi, WSDA Representative on the Conservation Commission

**SUBJECT:** Washington Soil Health Initiative Update

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Action Item

☐

Informational Item

☒

## Summary:

The Washington State Conservation Commission is one of three state agency partners in the Washington Soil Health Initiative (WaSHI). The mission of WaSHI is to promote collaborative research, education, and technical assistance activities that identify, promote, and implement sound soil health stewardship practices. These practices should be economically viable and voluntary for farmers and ranchers across the diverse agricultural communities, climates, and geographies in Washington. This snapshot showcases this successful collaboration across the WaSHI's first five years, building both scientific credibility and on-the-ground relevance. Formalized stakeholder engagement, long-term research investments, outreach and education, and financial incentives for growers are key components of program design. Key strategies include centering local expertise, investing in flexible partnerships, and maintaining a diverse program portfolio that can respond to shifting political and economic conditions.

## Background and Discussion:

WaSHI was codified into law in 2020 with overwhelming support from the Washington State Legislature. The statute listed three state agencies as WaSHI partners: The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC), the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), and Washington State University (WSU). Together, agencies were tasked with implementing “collaborative soil health research, education, demonstration projects, and technical assistance activities designed to identify, promote, and implement soil health stewardship practices that are grounded in sound science and that can be voluntarily and economically implemented by farmers and ranchers across Washington's diverse agricultural communities, climates, and geographies.”



## Discussion *(What is the problem and why is it important?)*

Each agency has a unique role in implementing WaSHI. Key activities of each agency are highlighted below. WaSHI efforts are guided by an advisory team that consists of representatives from different sectors of Washington agriculture and includes representatives from conservation districts from Eastern Washington and Western Washington.

Key activities of WaSHI include:

### WSU

- *Soil Health Roadmap*
- *Long Term Agroecological Research and Extension Sites*
- *SoilCon*

### SCC

- *Sustainable Farms and Fields*

### WSDA

- *Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources (STAR)*
- *State of the Soils Assessment*
- *Soil Health Ambassador Program*
- Outreach and decision support tools (including but not limited to WaCSE, Dirt Data Reports, Deep Soil Nutrients Visualizer, CTD Soil Health Curriculum)

## Next Steps:

Next steps for WaSHI include continuation of the efforts listed above as well as:

- Development of outcome metrics that showcase real world impacts and behavior change
- Integrating and leveraging private sector involvement
- Continued coordination with conservation districts
- Data integration across efforts

## Staff Contact:

Karen Hills [khills@scc.wa.gov](mailto:khills@scc.wa.gov) (564) 669-3292



To: Washington State Conservation Commission Members  
James Thompson, Executive Director

From: Commissioner Katie Rose Allen, Department of Natural Resources

Re: DNR Updates for WSCC Meeting – December 4, 2025

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### **Western Washington Forest Health Strategic Plan**

The Western Washington Forest Health Strategic Plan will provide a collaborative framework to advance forest health, resilience, and climate adaptation across western Washington's diverse forest landscapes.

The Western Washington Forest Health Strategic Plan will:

- Articulate a shared vision and develop goals and priorities for stewardship in the face of emerging threats such as climate change and drought, invasive species, and forest conversion.
- Build on lessons learned from the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan: Eastern Washington.
- Incorporate into the 2025 State Forest Action Plan Revision.

40+ partners participated in a day long July 8<sup>th</sup> kickoff meeting of the Western WA Forest Health Strategic Plan Work Group. It was a great start to an ongoing conversation DNR wants to lead with its partners to help define our collective vision, goals and actions for forest health in Western Washington.

DNR and partners hosted three field tours this summer to learn about relevant forest health issues:

- July 22, 2025, Darrington, WA
- August 27, 2025, Chimacum, WA
- September 16, 2025, Packwood, WA

The Work Group reconvened October 8<sup>th</sup> to review the feedback received from the July meeting and follow up surveys, and discuss lessons learned from the field trips to finalize the vision, mission and goal statements and to identify strategies and actions that can achieve our strategic plan goals. The DNR team has integrated that feedback into a revised draft of the Western Washington Forest Health Strategic Plan that will inform the content of the final strategic plan.

Contact Chuck Hersey at [Chuck.Hersey@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:Chuck.Hersey@dnr.wa.gov) if you have questions.

### **Certified Burn Manager Certification Program Rulemaking**

RCW 76.04.183 provided DNR with authority to create a Prescribed Burn Manager Certification Program. DNR is moving forward with adopting rulemaking for this program this winter.

DNR published a CR 101 – public notice of intent to adopt a rule, in the State Register in mid-September, and is working to publish a notice of proposed rulemaking (CR 102) for public comment this winter and planning to hold a public hearing and public comment period in early January.

Contact Kyle Lapham at [Kyle.Lapham@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Lapham@dnr.wa.gov) if you have questions.

### **Prescribed Fire Claims Fund Rulemaking**

HB 1563 established a Prescribed Fire Claims Fund pilot to provide financial coverage for losses resulting from approved prescribed fires and cultural burns on DNR protected lands and on tribal lands. The legislation aims to reduce liability concerns for prescribed fire practitioners and encourage more use of prescribed fire and cultural burning. The legislature provided \$2 million for the claims fund.

DNR is working with the Washington Department of Enterprise Services (DES) Office of Risk Management to set up and administer the Prescribed Fire Claims Fund. DNR published a CR 101 – public notice of intent to adopt a rule in the State Register November 19<sup>th</sup> and is working to publish a notice of proposed rulemaking (CR 102) for public comment this winter and planning to hold a public hearing and public comment period in January or February 2026.

Contact Johnathan Guzzo at [Jonathan.Guzzo@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:Jonathan.Guzzo@dnr.wa.gov) if you have questions.



## September/October 2025

The days are getting shorter, leaves are falling, and there's a chill in the air. Whether you're foraging for mushrooms, participating in backcountry hunting opportunities, enjoying watching wildlife, or reeling something in at your favorite fishing spot, we hope you're finding time this season to experience fall in Washington's great outdoors.

This season, WDFW has been spending time in communities across Washington state, talking to our neighbors about fish and wildlife conservation. You may have seen us at National Hunting and Fishing Day events in Waitsburg and Wenatchee in September. Perhaps you're hearing about fish and wildlife facts from your child enjoying our [Wild Washington curriculum](#). Maybe you live in one of the four communities where we awarded [a grant](#) recently to support watching wildlife. Or, you're just enjoying one of our [33 wildlife areas](#) and hundreds of water access areas close to home. All to say, everyone has a place in conservation, and this fall we've been grateful for every chance to welcome communities into the work we share.

At WDFW, we believe everyone belongs outdoors. Conservation is strongest when communities are included, welcomed, and heard, and we're committed to working with people across Washington to protect the fish and wildlife we all care about.

Read on for some of the other ways we're championing fish and wildlife near you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly Susewind". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Kelly Susewind, Director



*Fall colors in the Entiat Wildlife Area Unit. Photo by Alan Bauer.*

## **Topics in this message include:**

- **Watchable Wildlife Grant recipients announced**
- **Hunting prospects now available**
- **Record run of Baker sockeye: nearly 92,000 return in 2025**
- **Conserving North America's largest pigeon species through monitoring and management**
- **Study explores Dungeness crab movement in central Puget Sound**
- **Revised State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) draft out for public review**
- **Skagit County woman sentenced for wildlife trafficking**
- **New rules to help prevent the spread of chronic wasting disease**



- **Sparking students' curiosity with Wild Washington curriculum**
- **Research finds that chinook salmon confront cocktail of common chemicals in urban waters**



### **Watchable Wildlife Grant recipients announced**

WDFW recently awarded \$30,000 in Watchable Wildlife Grant funding for four projects that support wildlife viewing opportunities in Washington.

WDFW's [Watchable Wildlife Grant](#) awards grant funding to individuals, nonprofits, schools and universities, local and county governments, and federally-recognized tribes in Washington for projects that create, improve, increase, and/or promote community wildlife viewing, experiential, and learning opportunities. WDFW prioritized initiatives that were brought forward by or co-developed with

underserved and marginalized communities.

Watchable Wildlife Grant funding comes from the [Wild on Washington: Bald Eagle license plate](#), one of the state's [specialized wildlife license plates](#).

Refer to [WDFW's blog](#) for more information about this year's selected applicants.



### **Hunting prospects now available**

With fall in full swing, hunters across Washington are participating in big game, waterfowl, and upland bird seasons. In September, WDFW released its annual [hunting prospects](#), which provide guidance and hunting information for each of the state's 17 wildlife management districts to help hunters have a successful

season.

WDFW's district wildlife biologists create these reports using information from local sources and their own field observations. These popular reports provide detailed updates on expected conditions, harvest trends, and game activity that can help both new and experienced hunters. Refer to our [news release](#) for more.

Hunters can also use the [WDFW Hunt Planner online map](#), an interactive tool to find permit and general season hunts by location, date, weapon type, and more.

Interested in getting started hunting? There's still time with late-season big game hunts in November and December, and opportunities for waterfowl and upland birds into

January. Find tips for new hunters [in our blog post](#) and [on our website](#). Resources for hunters of all levels as part of our [hunting highlights series](#). Photo by Cory Hall.

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### **Record run of Baker sockeye: nearly 92,000 return in 2025**

WDFW, the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, and Puget Sound Energy are proud to announce that this year a record number of sockeye salmon returned to Skagit Bay and the Skagit River on their annual spawning migration. From June through October 2025 more than 91,880 sockeye returned on their journey to the Baker River and Baker Lake. [Learn more in our blog post](#).

The achievement is particularly meaningful given that sockeye populations in the Baker River system had declined to just 99 returning fish in the mid-1980s, bringing the species to near extinction in these waters near Mount Baker.

“The rebound of the [Baker sockeye population](#) — and 2025’s record return of salmon — is a testament to successful co-management between the state and treaty tribes as well as close collaboration with Puget Sound Energy,” said Edward Eleazer, Regional Fish Program Manager for WDFW. “Together we’ve led operation of the Baker Hatchery and collaborated on fish passage and habitat restoration projects, resulting in successful seasons of fruitful fishing opportunities for the state and tribes, and a bright future ahead.”

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### **Conserving North America’s largest pigeon species through monitoring and management**

Band-tailed pigeons are North America’s largest pigeon species and the nearest living relatives to the now-extinct passenger pigeon. These birds establish nests below 2,000 feet elevation, primarily west of the Cascades, and frequently visit residential areas and bird feeders.

WDFW is part of a project to track the band-tailed pigeons’ movements and find mineral sites where they congregate along the West Coast. Project goals are to more accurately survey the statewide population, better manage harvest seasons, and inform habitat management.

Learn more about this colorful wild pigeon species and WDFW’s conservation work [in our blog post](#). Photo by Nicole Perkins.

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### **Study explores Dungeness crab movement in central Puget Sound**

The winter recreational crab fishing season is open daily through Dec. 31 in many inland marine waterways, and crabbers are asked to report if they catch a tagged Dungeness crab. During a four-day period in late September, a collaboration project between WDFW and the Suquamish Tribe captured, tagged, and released 555 legal-size male Dungeness crab. The project – which aims to provide more insight on crab movement – spanned across six locations in [Marine Area 10 \(Seattle and Bremerton Area\)](#) from Alki Point in West Seattle north to Apple Cove Point near Kingston. Read more about the crab study [in our blog post](#).

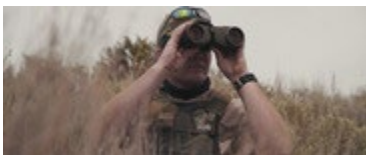
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### **Revised State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) draft out for public review**

WDFW is looking for public feedback on a draft of its revised State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), designed to guide fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation in Washington for the next 10 years. Materials for review are available on the Department's [SWAP webpage](#). The public can comment on those materials [online](#) through Nov. 16. More information is available in our [news release](#).

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### **Skagit County woman sentenced for wildlife trafficking**

A Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Police investigation into illegal trafficking of black bear parts resulted in a guilty plea, fine, and home confinement for a Skagit County resident. Yan L. Li, 54, was sentenced Aug. 25 in Skagit County Superior Court to 45 days of confinement and a \$1,800 fine after pleading guilty to one Class C Felony count of unlawful wildlife trafficking.

During the investigation, which lasted over several years, Li illegally bought whole waterfowl and black bear parts, consisting of 13 gall bladders, six livers, and 24 paws with the claws still attached, from undercover WDFW officers.

This sentencing reflects a collaborative effort between Fish and Wildlife Officers and the Washington State Attorney General's Office, Environmental Protection Division to combat unlawful wildlife trafficking within Washington state. Learn more in our [news release](#).





### **New rules to help prevent the spread of chronic wasting disease**

With deer, elk, and moose hunting seasons underway in Washington, a reminder for hunters that there are new rules to help prevent the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD). CWD is a fatal, contagious neurological disease that affects members of the deer family (cervids).

Its' presence was confirmed in WDFW's Eastern Region in July of 2024. As a result, all deer, elk, and moose harvested in Eastern Region must be sampled for the disease within five days of harvest. And hunters who harvest in Eastern Region but live in a different area of the state **must complete testing prior to leaving the region**. Transport rules also limit what carcass parts can be taken out of the region. Information on how to prepare your harvested animal for transport, how to have CWD testing completed, and much more is on WDFW's chronic wasting disease web page at [wdfw.wa.gov/cwd](https://wdfw.wa.gov/cwd). Photo by Melia DeVivo.



### **Sparking students' curiosity with Wild Washington curriculum**

Now that we're in the thick of the school year, WDFW is celebrating the incredible work of teachers across our state. We know that curiosity about nature often begins in the classroom and grows even more when students step outside. That's why WDFW has developed Wild

Washington curriculum units: free, ready-to-use lesson bundles that connect students with Washington's wildlife and ecosystems, while helping teachers develop the next generation of wildlife stewards.

So far, more than 300 teachers have participated in WDFW curriculum workshops and four school districts have officially integrated Wild Washington into their core science curriculum. That brings the potential reach of Wild Washington to over 18,500 students from across the state! Learn more in our [blog post](#).



### **Research finds that chinook salmon confront cocktail of common chemicals in urban waters**

A recently published WDFW study found juvenile Chinook salmon in urban waterways around Puget Sound contain numerous chemicals from everyday products, including

antibiotics, caffeine, pesticides, soaps, and PFOS/PFAS (“forever chemicals”).

Researchers from WDFW’s Toxics Biological Observation System (TBIOS) team sampled developing Chinook salmon from major Puget Sound watersheds for 10 years, testing for over 200 chemical compounds. Six chemicals were found in salmon from all sampled regions, and in the Green/Duwamish watershed, 11 chemicals were found at concentrations high enough to impact fish growth and development.

Learn more about the results of this groundbreaking study at our [blog](#).

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*Director’s Bulletins are also published [on WDFW’s Medium blog](#)  
and archived on the Director’s [webpage](#).*

## NACD Update

### Washington Association of Conservation Districts and Washington State Conservation Commission Meetings of November-Early December, 2025

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Information is current as of November 3, 2025. K:\WACD\2025\Board Meetings & Work Sessions\11-17-25\Nov-Dec 2025 NACD Update for WSCC-WACD.docx This update is excerpted from NACD CEO Jeremy Peters' [Updates on Recent Congressional and Executive Actions](#), NACD's [eResource](#) and conversations with NACD staff. Keep in mind these things change. Click on the links above for the latest information.

#### **SUBMIT NOMINATIONS FOR NACD'S HALL OF DISTINCTION**

NACD celebrates members and their contributions to conservation, and one of the ways we do that is through our [Hall of Distinction](#). Through NACD's Hall of Distinction, state and territory associations can recognize current and past conservation leaders for work advancing conservation at the national level. States and territories may induct one person to the Hall of Distinction every year. Inductees are reviewed by NACD's District & Partner Relations Committee and are announced at the 2026 NACD Annual Meeting in San Antonio.

To make an induction, state and territory associations are asked to send NACD information via this [online form](#) by **December 19, 2025**. Learn more about the Hall of Distinction, including eligibility criteria, [here](#).

Washington state has one member in the Hall of Distinction, **Wade Troutman** from the Foster Creek CD and current central representative at the State Conservation Commission.

#### **FRIENDS OF NACD DISTRICT GRANTS**

Grants are offered of up to \$2,500 for districts or state associations with innovative approaches to locally led conservation. Applications are accepted through **November 30**. Read the full request for proposals and eligibility criteria [on NACD's website](#).

#### **GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**

- **Courts and RIFs:** As the Trump administration sent over 4,000 Reduction in Force (RIF) notices during the government shutdown, a federal judge has granted a temporary restraining order prohibiting any more RIFs "during or related to the shutdown". [American Federation of Government Employees, et al., v. United States Office of Management and Budget, et al.](#)
- October 20, the Senate Agriculture committee passed a marked-up version of the [Fix Our Forests Act](#) (FOFA) with bipartisan support. If this bill moves forward to the Senate floor and passes, it will have to be reconciled with the House bill passed earlier this year and then voted on again by both houses. NACD supported the House bill and is encouraged by the inclusion and consideration for local input and natural resource recovery in the Senate's version.
- October 21, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins announced the Trump administration is planning to **reopen around 2,100 Farm Service Agency (FSA) county offices** and resume core agency operations.
- October 22, NACD sent a letter to Undersecretary of Farm Production and Conservation Richard Fordyce applauding the reopening of FSA offices, while urging USDA to also resume NRCS operations and allow conservation districts access to shared office space.
- **Federal Hiring Freeze:** President Trump signed a new [executive order](#) (EO) indefinitely extending the federal hiring freeze, in effect since January 20.
- **Plan for America's Ranchers and Communities:** (link to [Successful Farming article](#)) USDA unveiled its "Plan for America's Ranchers and Consumers" (PARC) on Wednesday, October 22. The broad plan outlines current and anticipated actions taken by USDA, DOI, and EPA to "protect and improve the business of ranching" through stabilizing the US beef industry, easing market volatility, and ensuring access and support for ranchers.

**NACD Update**  
Washington Association of Conservation Districts and  
Washington State Conservation Commission  
Meetings of November-Early December, 2025

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- Conservation districts are urged to document and communicate local impacts of the shutdown and executive actions through NACD's [Impact Survey](#) and to share stories directly with their Members of Congress.

**INFORMATIONAL NOTE**

- In the October 6 [CEO Policy and Partnership Update](#), there is advice (page 4) on Grassroots Advocacy.

**UPCOMING NACD EVENTS**

- [NACD's 80th Annual Meeting](#) - San Antonio Marriott Rivercenter, February 14-19, 2026.
- Summer July 18-22, 2026                      Grand Rapids, MI
- SW/Pacific Region meeting Date is TBD.                      Guam
- Annual February 6-10, 2027                      Las Vegas, NV
- Summer Meeting 2027                      Washington State?
- Annual February 5-9, 2028                      Louisville, KY
- Summer Meeting 2028                      To be determined.
- Annual February 3-7, 2029                      New Orleans, LA

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## **Status of Washington's 2024 Resolutions that went to NACD's 2025 Annual Meeting September 29, 2025**

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The NACD policy is the first information under the title of the resolution. The bulleted paragraphs are the status of where NACD is with the resolutions.

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### **1. 2024-03 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) signature requirements.**

NACD supports changing Schedule USC 3832 (the CRP handbook) allowing districts the option to submit a signature waiver opting out of signing CRP conservation plans.

- CRP changes have not gained attention since our Annual Meeting as the program was not included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the budget reconciliation bill which addressed many other conservation programs. The program may be modified throughout the "Farm Bill 2.0" negotiation process through marker bills such as Sen. Thune's CRP Improvement and Flexibility Act of 2025, which could present a legislative vehicle for this ask. However, the timeline for a farm bill is unpredictable and prone to delay.

### **2. 2024-06 Improving the USDA Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense Grant Scoring Process.**

NACD supports working with the Forest Service to improve and make the Community Wildfire Defense grant scoring process more transparent.

- Note from Policy Disposition Report: "The CWDG program has continued this year, but with wildfire services proposed to move from the US Forest Service to the Department of Interior, it is unknown how this program will persist or be managed in coming fiscal years. In the interim, opportunities exist for NACD to engage with affected districts as well as western state forestry partners, like the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition. Additionally, as USDA authorizes new obligations and USFS contemplates release of an FY26 solicitation, NACD will re-engage with USFS staff to elevate concerns about CWDG scoring inconsistencies and elevate feedback on proposed ranking criteria."
- Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins [announced](#) the latest round of CWDG grants last week (week of 9/22), an investment of \$200 million to 58 projects. Secretary Rollins has made streamlining and transparency a priority for her tenure, including the timely dissemination of information on awardees and the scoring process. Included in the recent CWDG announcement was a site dedicated to this purpose, which can be found [here](#).

### **3. 2024-09 The Role of FSA and NRCS in Managing CREP and CRP**

NACD supports transferring full management of CREP, CRP, and similar programs to NRCS, with FSA handling non-technical financial functions, and establishing an inter-agency collaboration framework ensuring program effectiveness.

- Note from Policy Disposition Report: "Given the priorities set forth by the Secretary and USDA's pending reorganization, discussions relating to such topics have been on hold. Due to the sensitive nature of proposed reorganizations and transfers of functions, NACD will engage with the USDA leaders as appropriate."

**Status of Washington's 2024 Resolutions that went to NACD's 2025 Annual Meeting  
September 29, 2025**

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- Outlook has not improved since PD report. This administration has indicated an interest in maintaining, if not increasing, FSA's portfolio. When combined with staffing decreases across multiple agencies, management shifts into NRCS are not likely.

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Washington Association of  
Conservation Districts



## December 2025 Partner Report



# ADVOCACY

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There were 12 resolutions adopted by the Area Associations in October. Six of the resolutions were reviewed by the WACD Legislative, Bylaws, and District Policies Committee and six were reviewed by the Natural Resources Committee. The committee's made recommendations of Do Pass, Do Pass as Amended, or Do Not Pass for each resolution. You can find the original resolutions and amended resolutions [here](#). The resolutions will now go to the Annual Meeting where CDs will formally vote on whether to adopt them.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

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- January 15, 2026 – WSCC Meeting (*virtual*)
- January 19, 2025 – WACD Board Meeting
- February 10, 2025 – WACD Legislative Day
- February 16, 2025 – WACD Board Meeting
- March 16, 2025 – WACD Board Meeting
- March 18 – 19, 2025 – WSCC Meeting, *Host CD - San Juan Islands*

## WACD COMMITTEE UPDATES

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As I write this, it is November 6<sup>th</sup>, and WACD Committees are hard at work finalizing their reports ahead of the WACD Annual Meeting. Here is a sneak peak at what is to come:

**Plant Materials Taskforce** – The Taskforce itself is no longer meeting but WACD staff continue to work on implementing the groups recommended strategies. *Coming Soon* ~look for an update on our ongoing work in the WACD Annual Meeting packet and on the [HUB](#).

**CTD Funding Workgroup** – In 2024, the Association passed Resolution 2024-12 that stated in part, “WACD, in collaboration with the Center for Technical Development (CTD), WSCC, WADE, and Conservation Districts, will develop a workgroup to identify ongoing, adequate funding support for the Center for Technical Development...” The workgroup was formed and began meeting in May of 2025. The Workgroup is finalizing their briefing document with recommended strategies. The brief will be included in the WACD Annual Meeting Packet.

**Sustainable Funding Committee** – The Sustainable Funding Committee was created by Resolution 2015-09 as a temporary committee. In 2021, the temporary committee was made a permanent standing committee. The committee spent much of 2023 and 2024 working with districts to determine their current and future funding needs and to refine funding alternatives. This past year, the committee has worked to identify the top 2 models for the Associations consideration ahead of the annual meeting. *Coming Soon* ~look for an update on our ongoing work in the WACD Annual Meeting packet and on the [HUB](#).



# OPERATIONS

## EXECUTIVE OFFICE

- The WACD Board of Directors will hold a **Board Retreat** on December 1st. Information on the retreat can be found [here](#).
- At their October board meeting the WACD Board of Directors approved their **Strategic Plan**. A roadmap for the organization through 2030. The Strategic Plan can be found [here](#).
- WACD has launched its **2026 Legislative Campaign!** This year's campaign features postcards designed to highlight the importance and need for Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency and Conservation Technical Assistance funding.

WACD called for volunteers from conservation districts across the state to sit on a focus group to help our consultant, [KR Creative Strategies](#), to develop the postcards.

**Why postcards?** – Legislators want to hear from their constituents. The landowners who are directly impacted in their communities.

Learn more about our postcard campaign [here](#).

- In **2026 and 2027** the WACD Annual Conference and Business Meeting will be held at beautiful **Skamania Lodge**. We will see you there!



## PLANT MATERIALS CENTER

- **Sales** to districts are up. As of October 1st, we have 8 contract orders, 49 district orders and 111 orders from other conservation organizations and entities. Compared to last fiscal year when we had 6 contract orders, 37 district orders and 142 orders from other conservation organizations and entities.
- **New this year** at the PMC, we have a stunning crop of P-1 **Western Red Cedar** ready for 2026. These trees are perfect for a variety of projects and landscapes. If you have questions or would like more information, please reach out to Jacquie - [salesmanager@wacdpmc.org](mailto:salesmanager@wacdpmc.org)



- **John Knox**, PMC Nursery Manager, recently published an article in **Forest Stewardship Notes and Landowner News**. The article, "Growing Your Own Plants in the Winter with Hardwood Cuttings," explores winter as an overlooked time to propagate plants. The article also covers which plants are good candidates for cuttings, the benefits and drawbacks of cutting lengths, and much more. You can access the article [here](#).