



Washington State Conservation Commission

Meeting Packet

September 17, 2026

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

North Bonneville, Washington

Our Mission:

“To conserve natural resources on all lands in Washington State, through voluntary and incentive-based programs, in collaboration with conservation districts and other partners.”

WSCC Business Meeting
North Bonneville, Washington

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 Alicia McClendon at amcclendon@scc.wa.gov or call 711 relay service. All accommodation requests should be received no later than September 1, 2026, 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 a 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
9:30 a.m.		Call to order/Welcome/Introductions • Commissioner Roll Call • Guest Introductions • Pledge of Allegiance • Additions/Corrections to agenda items	Chair Kearney
9:45 a.m.		Executive Director's Report	Director Thompson

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
10:00 a.m.	1.	Consent Agenda (<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) July 16, 2026, Draft Business Meeting Minutes b) Out-of-State Travel Request	Chair Kearney Director Thompson
10:05 a.m.	1.	Commission Operations (<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) 2027 Commission Meetings Proposed Schedule	Tara Long
10:10 a.m.	1.	District Operations (<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.	
		d) Conservation District Mid-Term Supervisor Appointments: - Thurston Conservation District - Underwood Conservation District	Comm. Blake Comm. Blake
10:15 a.m.	1.	Policy, Budget and Finance (<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.	
		e) Rulemaking: Commission Meetings f) Rulemaking: Conservation District Elections g) Updating the Election and Appointment Guide	Dani Madrone Bill Eller Dani Madrone
11:10 a.m.		10-min Break	
11:20 a.m.	1.	Programs (<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.	
		h) Program Guideline Update: Modification of CREP Assistance	Hilary Aten

TIME	TAB	ITEM	LEAD
11:30 a.m.	2.	Programs <i>(Information Only)</i>	
		i) Program Guidelines Updates	Hilary Aten & Tara Long
11:40 a.m.	2.	Commission Operations <i>(Information Only)</i>	
		j) Chair and Vice-chair Nominating Committee	Chair Kearney
	2.	District Operations <i>(Information Only)</i>	
		k) District Operations Report	<i>Packet item only</i>
11:50 a.m.	2.	Policy, Budget and Finance <i>(Information Only)</i>	
		l) Multi-biennia Contract Progress Update	Director Thompson
12:00 p.m.		50 – Minute Lunch Break	
12:50 p.m.	2.	Policy, Budget and Finance cont'd. <i>(Information Only)</i>	
		m) Ombuds Working Group Progress Update	Sarah Groth & Tara Long
1:35 p.m.	2.	Partner Updates <i>(Information Only)</i>	
		n) Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD)	Heather Wendt
		o) Washington Association of District Employees (WADE)	Sarah Moorehead
		p) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	Nick Vira
		q) Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE)	Brook Beeler
		r) Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA)	<i>Packet item only</i>
1:55 p.m.		Strategic Planning Workshop: Values and Goals Facilitators: Jessica Wilson & Tara Long	
3:45 p.m.		Adjourn	Chair Kearney

TAB 1

Regular Business Meeting ~

The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission/SCC) met virtually as well as in-person on Thursday, July 16, 2026, in Burlington, Washington. Chair Cherie Kearney called the meeting to order at 9:30 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

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

A quorum was present.

COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT

James Thompson, Executive Director
Alicia McClendon, Administrative Assistant
Allisa Carlson, Central WA Regional Manager
Bill Eller, Special Projects Coordinator
Dani Madrone, Director of Policy & Governmental Affairs
Jessica Wilson, Chief Engagement Officer
Kate Delavan, Deputy Director
Lori Gonzalez, Executive Assistant
Sarah Groth, Chief Financial Officer
Tami Stubbs, SE WA Regional Manager

Additional staff are listed in the attachments.

PARTNERS REPRESENTED

Angie Reseland, Dept of Fish and Wildlife (online)
Roylene Comes at Night, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Nick Vira, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (online)
Craig Nelson, WA Association of District Employees (online)
Tom Salzer, WA Association of Conservation Districts (online)
Heather Wendt, WA Association of Conservation Districts
Ryan Baye, WA Association of Conservation Districts (online)

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 Alicia McClendon. A quorum was present. Following roll call, introductions were made for guests attending both in person and online.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Draft May 21, 2026- Business Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the draft May 21, 2026 Business Meeting Minutes.

Seconded by Commissioner Troutman. Motion passed.

Out of State Travel Request

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the SCC executive director and a commission member to travel to Guam for the NACD Pacific and Southwest Regional Meeting August 23-28, 2026.

Seconded by Commissioner Blake. Motion passed.

POLICY, BUDGET AND FINANCE

Authorization on 2027-2029 Decision Packages and Not-to-Exceed Amounts

Motion by Commissioner McKay to approve submission of decision packages and not-to-exceed amounts, presented in Option B for all programs except the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The RCPP amount will reflect the match request submitted by conservation districts by the August 24, 2026 RCPP application deadline. Seconded by Commissioner Gelardi

Seconded by Commissioner Gelardi. Motion passed.

Decision Package Prioritization:

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the following prioritization of decision package requests. Seconded by Commissioner Gelardi:

Capital budget:

1. Natural Resources Investment
2. Riparian Grant Program
3. Irrigation Efficiencies Grant Program
4. Voluntary Stewardship Program
5. Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative
6. Shellfish
7. Regional Conservation Partnership Program
8. Farmland Protection and Land Access

Operating budget:

1. Conservation Technical Assistance
2. Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency
3. Science Hub

Commissioner Troutman moves to amend the current resolution on the floor to prioritize decision packages based on the number of conservation districts participating in each program.

Seconded by Commissioner Beeler.

Original motion as amended. Motion passed.

Policy on Policies: Comment Period Update

Motion by Commissioner Beeler to approve a change to Policy # 2023-09: SCC Procedure on Creating a New Policy to reduce the 45-day minimum public comment period to 30 day minimum.

Seconded by Commissioner Blake. Motion passed.

PROGRAMS

ACES Authorization to Enter Purchase and Sale Agreements

Motion by Commissioner McKay: The Commission has determined acquisition of conservation easements on the subject properties is consistent with the mission, duties, and purposes of the State Conservation Commission.

The Commission hereby authorizes the Conservation Commission's Executive Director to sign documents for acquisition of agricultural conservation easements, at appraised value, on the approximately 1,555-acre Williams Rangeland in Yakima County, and 1,326-acre Luna Gulch farm in Klickitat County, contingent upon completion of the appraisal reviews and survey.

Seconded by Commissioner Gelardi. Motion passed.

Voluntary Stewardship Program Statewide Advisory Committee Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Blake to appoint Greg Green from Ducks Unlimited to the VSP Statewide Advisory Committee for a two-year term, effective immediately.

Seconded by Commissioner Cochran. Commissioner Gelardi abstains. Motion passed.

Chair Kearney adjourned the meeting at 1:55 p.m.

Zoom Registration Report for July 16, 2026

First Name	Last Name	First Name	Last Name
1 Alicia	McClendon	22 Tara	Long
2 Angie	Reseland	23 Rachel	Haymon
3 nicole	boyes	24 Becca	Hebron
4 Craig	Nelson	25 Annie	Byerley
5 Ashley	Wood	26 Tom	Salzer
6 Bill	Eller	27 Kim	Williams
7 Zorah	Oppenheimer	28 Karen	Hills
8 Jodi	Prout	29 Mike	Nordin
9 Brandy	Reed	30 Megan	Stewart
10 Virginia	Shogren	31 Alan	Chapman
11 Mike	Poteet	32 Katie Rose	Allen
12 Tami	Stubbs	33 Kate	Delavan
13 Heather	Wendt	34 Evan	Bauder
14 Brad	Riehle	35 Levi	Keesecker
15 Allisa	Carlson	36 Lori	Gonzalez
16 Scott	Noble	37 Anna	Lael
17 Josh	Larsen	38 Linda	Lyshall
18 Margaret	McKeown	39 Kara	Kaelber
19 Nate	Jackson	40 Alec	Sorensen
20 Ryan	Williams	41 Michael	Tobin
21 Sarah	Moorehead	42 Vicki	Carter



Washington State Conservation Commission

Thursday, July 16, 2026
Regular Business Meeting

Please Sign In

	Name	Entity
1.	Craig T Nelson ✓	Okanogan CD
2.	Sarah Green ✓	SCC
3.	Jessie Wilson ✓	SCC
4.	NICK WIRA	NRPS
5.	Bill Blah ✓	SCC
6.	Dani Gelardi ✓	WSDA
7.	Jennifer Boie ✓	Palouse CD
8.	Mike Lopez ✓	SCC
9.	Dani Madrone ✓	SCC
10.	Sarah Jones ✓	Snohomish CD
11.	LARRY COCHRAN ✓	SCC
12.	Wade Troutman ✓	SCD
13.	Jim Kroft ✓	WSU
14.	Amy McKay ✓	WACD/Commissioner
15.	Hilary Aton ✓	SCC
16.	Paul DiGirola ✓	SCC
17.	Alan Chapman ✓	Whitcomb CD/WACD
18.	Ryan Borge	WACD
19.	Kate Delavan ✓	SCC



Washington State Conservation Commission

Thursday, July 16, 2026
Regular Business Meeting

Please Sign In

	Name	Entity
20.	Linda Lyshall ✓	Snohomish CO
21.	Addie Candub	American Farmland Trust
22.	Tosh Guntow ✓	WSCC
23.	Lora Liegel ✓	WSCC
24.	Jennifer Coe ✓	SCC
25.	Joseph Messersheid ✓	TCD/WADE
26.	Lori Gonzalez ✓	SCC
27.	Alicia McClendon ✓	SCC
28.	James Thompson ✓	SCC
29.	Cherie Kearney ✓	SCC
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Washington State Conservation Commission

September 17, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
FROM: James Thompson, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Out of State Travel Request

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 an upcoming out-of-state travel.

Event Name: National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) Annual Meeting

Location: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Dates: October 4-7, 2026

Registration Cost: \$495.00

About NASCA: The National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) is dedicated to strengthening natural resource conservation efforts across the United States by fostering collaboration, supporting professional development, and promoting sound policy initiatives. NASCA exists to provide a platform where individuals can connect with peers who truly understand their challenges and share a common commitment to preserving natural resources. By coordinating efforts and sharing expertise, NASCA helps ensure that state agencies are equipped to address both current and emerging challenges.

Additional information about the annual meeting can be found on the [NASCA Website](#).

Requested Action:

Approve out-of-state travel for the Executive Director and/or Commissioners to attend the 2026 NASCA Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, October 4-7, 2026.

Staff Contact:

James Thompson, Executive Director / jthompson@scc.wa.gov



Washington State Conservation Commission

September 17, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, Executive Director

FROM: Tara Long, Strategic Initiatives Manager

SUBJECT: 2027 Commission Meetings Proposal

Action Item

X

Informational Item

Summary:

Annually, the Regional Managers work with other Commission staff and conservation districts to propose meeting locations and host conservation districts for the upcoming year of Commission meetings. A proposal for the following years' meetings is being brought forward today for review and requested action.

Requested Action:

Staff are requesting that Commissioners approve the proposed Commission meeting dates, proposed locations, and hybrid meeting format for calendar year 2027.

Staff Contact:

Tara Long, tlong@scc.wa.gov, (564) 669-0049

Background and Discussion:

SCC staff propose the physical locations for 2027 meetings noted in Table 1. Offering a remote participation option for each meeting is also proposed in keeping with current policy and practice. Multiple factors are considered as locations and conservation district hosts are determined. Those factors include:

- weather and potential travel conditions at that time of the year,
- local infrastructure and logistics for a tour, interactive dinner, and the business meeting (available hotels/meeting spaces),
- conservation district capacity to put together and host a tour and interactive dinner,
- conservation district willingness,
- length of time since the conservation district last hosted,
- potential tour content or stops, and
- SCC staff capacity and meeting costs.

Accounting for the poor weather conditions statewide in January making travel difficult if not unsafe, the proximity to the start of the 2027 legislative session, and conservation district interest and capacity to host a tour that time of year, we are proposing not to conduct an in-person tour in January of 2027. Instead, we propose holding the physical business meeting in Lacey.

The December meeting is proposed for a Wednesday to accommodate the WACD annual conference.

Table 1: 2027 Commission Meeting Dates and Physical Locations

Date	Hosting District	Location
January 21, 2027	NA	Lacey
March 17 & 18, 2027	Columbia Basin CD	Moses Lake
May 18, 19, & 20, 2027	Spokane CD	Spokane
July 14 & 15, 2027	Whidbey Island CD	TBD
September 15 & 16, 2027	Walla Walla County CD	Walla Walla
December 1, 2027	NA	Stevenson (Skamania Lodge)



Washington State Conservation Commission

September 17, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Alicia McClendon, Administrative Assistant

SUBJECT: Conservation District Mid-Term Supervisor Appointments

Action Item

X

Informational Item

Summary:

The SCC received six (6) conservation district mid-term supervisor appointment applications to fill a vacancy on two (2) conservation district boards.

The applications were sent to all Commission members for their review prior to the September 17th business meeting. Commissioners and commission staff followed the process adopted in March of 2018 to conduct a more comprehensive vetting of the applications received for Commission appointment, including conducting interviews with new applicants, and contacting references. For situations where an incumbent is the only applicant for a position, the incumbent will be re-appointed.

A recommendation for appointment will be given by the appropriate or designated area elected commission member.

Conservation District Mid-Term Supervisor Appointments

Conservation District	Name of Applicants	Area Commissioner	Regional Manager
Thurston	1. Mr. Kevin Cornell 2. Ms. Kyle Noble 3. Mr. Richard Jones	Bill Blake	Josh Giuntoli
Underwood	1. Mr. Doug Lovelace 2. Mr. Mark Lisin 3. Mr. Spencer Bohaboy	Bill Blake (<i>for Wade Troutman</i>)	Allisa Carlson

Requested Action:

After recommendation and discussion, members will appoint the applicant to the conservation district board, as appropriate.

Staff Contact:

Alicia McClendon, amcclendon@scc.wa.gov

Allisa Carlson, acarlson@scc.wa.gov

Josh Giuntoli, jgiuntoli@scc.wa.gov



Washington State Conservation Commission

September 17, 2026

TO: James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Dani Madrone, Director of Policy and Governmental Affairs

SUBJECT: Rulemaking: Commission Meetings

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

At the May 21 business meeting of the Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC), Commissioners directed staff to explore, and if determined to be feasible, begin the expedited rulemaking process to remove the business start time and specific days from Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 135-04-020. SCC staff determined that it was feasible and proceeded with the process. Staff drafted the changes to the WAC, filed form CR-105 with the Office of the Code Reviser (OCR), and waited a required 45 days for any individual to raise objections to making changes through expedited rulemaking. After that period, no objections were raised, which allows SCC to proceed with amending the WAC.

Requested Action:

Motion to approve the changes to WAC Chapter 135-04-020 as recommended by the Executive Director and direct staff to file the final rule change with the Office of the Code Reviser.

Background and Discussion:

WAC 135-04-020 is prescriptive in the dates and start times of Commission meetings. It has been a challenge to not have flexibility on what times and days meetings occur. On May 21, 2026, Commissioners directed staff to explore, and if determined to be feasible, begin the expedited rulemaking process to remove the business start time and specific days from this WAC.

Staff researched the process for expedited rulemaking, which is a streamlined process an agency can use for rulemaking that is minor and noncontroversial without a public hearing unless

objections are raised. Because this rule addresses internal governmental operations and is not subject to be violated by a person, it is eligible for expedited rulemaking.

Staff drafted the rule changes and filed the Notice of Expedited Rule-Making (CR-105) with OCR, which publishes the proposed rule change in the Washington State Register. The rule change reads as follows:

WAC 135-04-020 Regular meetings. The state conservation commission, established pursuant to chapter 89.08 RCW, shall hold its regular meetings for the transaction of official business ~~((on the third Thursday of every other month))~~ at least six times per year at times determined by the commission, beginning in January 1974. ~~((Such regular meetings shall commence at 9:30 a.m. If at any time any regular meeting falls on a holiday, such regular meeting shall be held on the next business day.))~~

Staff received no objection to the expedited rulemaking process, so the Commission can proceed with formally adopting the amendment to WAC 135-04-020.

Next Steps:

After adoption by the Commission, staff will file the Final Rule (CR-103P) with OCR. The new rule will take effect 31 days after filing.

Staff Contact:
<i>Dani Madrone, Director of Policy and Governmental Affairs</i> dmadrone@scc.wa.gov 564-250-2677

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending Order 1-73, filed 11/19/73)

WAC 135-04-020 Regular meetings. The state conservation commission, established pursuant to chapter 89.08 RCW, shall hold its regular meetings for the transaction of official business (~~((on the third Thursday of every other month))~~) at least six times per year at times determined by the commission, beginning in January 1974. (~~((Such regular meetings shall commence at 9:30 a.m. If at any time any regular meeting falls on a holiday, such regular meeting shall be held on the next business day.))~~)



Washington State Conservation Commission

September 1, 2026

TO: James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Bill Eller, Special Projects Coordinator

SUBJECT: Rulemaking: Conservation District Elections

Action Item

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Informational Item

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Summary:

The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) is required by Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 89.08.190 to adopt procedures for conservation district elections. These procedures are adopted through Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Chapter 135-110: *Election and Replacement of Conservation District Supervisors*. On March 19, 2026, SCC Commissioners authorized staff to begin the rulemaking process related to certain aspects of conservation district (CD) elections. The proposed rule changes were filed with the state Code Reviser. The comment period was open from June 17 to July 31, and a public hearing was held on July 30. SCC staff reviewed comments and made adjustments to the WAC updates based on those comments. A Concise Explanatory Statement and a final version of the WAC changes is included with this memo for adoption.

Requested Action:

Motion to approve the changes to WAC Chapter 135-110 as recommended by the Executive Director and to adopt the final rule, as set out in this memo and the supporting materials, including the Concise Explanatory Statement.

Staff Contact:

Bill Eller, Special Projects Coordinator, beller@scc.wa.gov, (509) 385-7512

Dani Madrone, Director of Policy and Governmental Affairs, dmadrone@scc.wa.gov, 564-250-2677

Background and Discussion:

On March 19, 2026, SCC Commissioners authorized staff to update the conservation district elections WAC in response to a Thurston County Superior Court hearing on December 12, 2025. Details on the background of this rulemaking process, including the reason for amending the WAC and the originally proposed changes, can be found in an attachment titled: *Rulemaking: Proposed Changes to Conservation District Election Rules (WAC 135-110)*. Commissioners also authorized SCC staff to follow the OCR's required public comment process for rulemaking in lieu of SCC's standard procedure for public comment.

Rulemaking requires specific steps for notification and public comment as set out by the Officer of the Code Reviser (OCR). A rulemaking timeline is below.

SCC is required by the Administrative Procedure Act to develop a Concise Explanatory Statement to state the reasons for the changes, describe the changes from proposed to final adopted rules, and provide a response to all public comments. That document is included in the attachments for Commissioners to adopt along with the amendments to the WAC.

The timeline and steps taken for rulemaking include:

- March 26: CR-101 filed with OCR, rulemaking announcement in Washington State Register (WSR) 26-08-051
- March-May: Rule language and other supporting documents prepared
- May 27: CR-102 and draft WAC rule language filed with OCR, posted on our web page, and distributed to conservation districts
- June 17: Draft WAC rule language published in the WSR #26-12-037
- June 17 – July 31: Public comment period
- July 30: Public hearing in Lacey - Best Western Plus Lacey Inn and Suites
- August 1-31: Staff reviewed comments and created a Concise Explanatory Statement, proposed amendments to election rules based on the comments received, and prepared adoption packet for OCR
- September 17: Commission meeting for adoption of final rules and Concise Explanatory Statement. If adopted, staff anticipates filing the CR-103 soon after Sept 17. WAC amendments become effective 31 days later.
- September 29: Annual training with CDs on elections, which will include changes to WAC 135-110.

Changes to the Proposed Rule Based on Public Comment:

We received thirty-nine public comments during the official comment period, including two during the public hearing.

The public hearing for the proposed elections rule amendments was conducted on Thursday, July 30, 2026. The hearing was conducted both in-person and by webinar. The physical location for the hearing was the Best Western Plus Lacey Inn and Suites in Lacey, WA.

Five people attended the hearing in-person (all SCC staff), and fourteen attended online. A brief informational presentation on SCC's rulemaking process was provided before the start of the formal hearing.

After reviewing the public comments, SCC staff recommend additional changes to the original proposed package the Commission authorized on March 19, 2026. Details on those changes can be seen in the attached final draft version of the WAC Chapter 135-110 amendments containing "track changes" and are described in the Concise Explanatory Statement.

A complete draft of the changes is attached to this memo. A summary of all changes to WAC 135-110 include:

- Creating a definition of "alternate" (previously "designee"), which is a role that can serve as a substitute to perform necessary tasks should the district's election supervisor become unavailable.
- Clarifying that a polling officer must not have a conflict of interest.
- Including both state and county elections offices as resources for districts to obtain a current list of registered voters. Districts must have a current list before ballot requests are fulfilled, and an updated list valid for the final day ballots are due before tallying ballots.
- Creating new rules when fulfilling a ballot request:
 - The voter must provide sufficient information to verify their eligibility. They will be required to sign an attestation on the ballot to affirm their identity.
 - Districts must verify voters are eligible before providing a ballot. This must be completed by a polling officer or the election supervisor.
- Creating specificity for provisional ballots so they are:
 - Provided if voter eligibility cannot be determined.
 - Distinguishable from regular ballot.
 - Tallied only if the voter is deemed eligible after ballot is returned.
 - Provided if a voter requests a ballot after a previous request has already been fulfilled. Only the first ballot received by that voter is tallied.
 - Tracked so the district can confirm that a voter who returns a provisional ballot had requested one.
- Requiring that, if a district sends ballots that were not requested by voters, they must be sent to all eligible voters in the district.
- Allowing districts to maintain a list of voters who request ballots be provided each election, though they must still verify each voter prior to sending a ballot.
- Clarifying that, for poll-site elections, the voter must place their own ballot into the ballot box.

Next Steps:

If the proposed changes are adopted today without any changes to the text, Commission staff anticipates that the necessary paperwork would be filed with OCR on September 21, 2026. Thirty-one days after that, the new amendments become effective. They would be in effect around November 1, 2026 – in time for the 2026-2027 CD election cycle.

If the proposed changes are adopted today with changes to the text, SCC staff would need time to draft those changes and include them with filing to OCR. That would likely push back the effective date to November 15, 2026 – still in time for the 2026-2027 conservation district election cycle.

SCC staff will educate conservation districts on the changes to the rules through the annual election training, which is scheduled to for September 29, 2026. Staff will update the Elections Guide prior to the training.

WAC 135-110-110 Definitions. "Alternate" means a person appointed by the conservation district board of supervisors to serve as the alternate to the election supervisor. The alternate should be trained in the role and specific duties of the election supervisor. Should the election supervisor become unavailable, the alternate will ensure necessary tasks are completed to conduct the election.

"Ballot" or "official ballot" means the final, preprinted ballot containing the name of each declared, nominated candidate found eligible, and at least one line where a voter may enter the name of a write-in candidate.

"Ballot box" means a container secured against tampering into which paper ballots are placed.

"Candidate" means a person seeking the office of elected conservation district supervisor who has provided the required candidate information to the conservation district by the filing deadline and whose eligibility to run and to serve has been verified by the conservation district.

"Candidate optional information" means information provided by the candidate about their candidacy.

"Candidate required information" means the factual information a candidate must provide on the candidate information form to be eligible for election.

"Canvass" and "canvassing" means to examine carefully or scrutinize the election returns for authenticity and proper count.

"Certify" and "certification" means the canvassing of returns and the verification of substantial compliance with these procedures by the conservation commission.

"Conservation commission" means the Washington state conservation commission governing board and all deputies and representatives authorized to act on its behalf.

"Conservation commission board" and "conservation commission governing board" means the governing board of the Washington state conservation commission.

"Conservation district" means a governmental subdivision of the state of Washington organized under the provisions of chapter 89.08 RCW Conservation districts.

"Conservation district supervisors" and "district supervisors" means the governing board of a conservation district, composed of elected and appointed supervisors.

"Declared vacant" means a declaration by the conservation commission that a conservation district supervisor position is vacant.

"Double envelope balloting" means a paper balloting system consisting of an inner and an outer envelope, where a ballot is placed in an inner envelope with no personally identifying marks on it, and then the inner envelope with ballot is placed in the outer envelope upon which the voter has provided sufficient information to allow polling officers to verify the eligibility of the voter.

"Due notice" or "notice" means a notice published at least twice, with at least six days between publications, in a publication of general circulation within the affected area. If there is no such publication, a notice may be posted at a reasonable number of public places within the area where it is customary to post notices concerning county and municipal affairs. There is no requirement for publication of a

legal advertisement in a newspaper of record. However, if a legal advertisement is published, a copy of the announcement as published, showing the date of publication, is sufficient proof of publication.

"Elected supervisor" means a qualified district elector:

(a) Who received more valid votes than any other candidate; and
(b) Whose election has been certified and announced by the conservation commission.

"Election supervisor" means an individual or entity appointed by conservation district supervisors to organize, coordinate, and manage tasks related to the election of conservation district supervisors. Only the conservation district board of supervisors may set election dates and appoint the election supervisor.

"Electioneering" means the act of soliciting or advocating votes for a specific candidate, or speaking for or against a specific candidate within ~~((three hundred))~~ 300 feet of a ballot box or voting place.

"Farm and agricultural land" is defined in RCW 89.08.020 as follows: "Farm and agricultural land" means either:

(a) Land in any contiguous ownership of ~~((twenty))~~ 20 or more acres devoted primarily to agricultural uses;

(b) Any parcel of land five acres or more, but less than ~~((twenty))~~ 20 acres devoted primarily to agricultural uses, which has produced a gross income from agricultural uses equivalent to ~~((one hundred dollars))~~ \$100 or more per acre per year for three of the five calendar years preceding the date of application for classification under this chapter; or

(c) Any parcel of land of less than five acres devoted primarily to agricultural uses which has produced a gross income of ~~((one thousand dollars))~~ \$1,000 or more per year for three of the five calendar years preceding the date of application for classification under this chapter.

(d) Agricultural lands shall also include farm woodlots of less than ~~((twenty))~~ 20 and more than five acres and the land on which appurtenances necessary to production, preparation, or sale of the agricultural products exist in conjunction with the lands producing such products.

(e) Agricultural lands shall also include any parcel of land of one to five acres, which is not contiguous, but which otherwise constitutes an integral part of farming operations being conducted on land qualifying under this section as "farm and agricultural lands."

"Farm operator" or "operator of a farm" means a person who operates farm and agricultural land.

"Filing deadline" means four weeks before election day in the current election cycle, or, if a local filing deadline that is more than four weeks before election day is adopted by formal action of the conservation district supervisors, that adopted filing deadline.

"Full term," "regular term," and "full term of office" means a three-year term of office.

"Incumbent" means the person in present possession of the office of conservation district supervisor.

"Landowner" means a person with legal title of record to real property in the conservation district at the time of filing for election or applying for appointment.

"Mail-in election" means an election in which mail-in ballots are provided before election day to qualified voters. Voters return completed ballots to a receiving location or address authorized by the conservation district board of supervisors.

"Malfeasance" means wrongful conduct that affects, interrupts, or interferes with the performance of a supervisor's official duty.

"Mid-term" and "mid-term vacancy" means a vacancy in the office of conservation district supervisor, when such vacancy occurs before the full term of office has been fulfilled.

"Municipal officer" means all elected and appointed officers of a conservation district, together with all deputies and assistants of such an officer, and all persons exercising or undertaking to exercise any of the powers or functions of a municipal officer.

"Neglect of duty" means failure by a supervisor or supervisors to perform mandatory duties. Such duties include, but are not limited to:

(a) Compliance with laws and rules imposed by local, state, and federal government entities;

(b) Attendance at a sufficient number of board meetings so as to not impede the work of the conservation district;

(c) Maintaining a full and accurate record of district business;

(d) Securing of surety bonds for board officers and employees;

(e) Carrying out an annual financial audit;

(f) Providing for keeping current a comprehensive long-range program;

(g) Providing for preparation of an annual work plan;

(h) Providing for informing the general public, agencies, and occupiers of lands within the conservation district of conservation district plans and programs;

(i) Providing for including affected community members in regard to current and proposed plans and programs; and

(j) Providing for the submission of the conservation district's proposed long-range program and annual work plan to the conservation commission.

"Poll list" or "polling list" means a list of voters who voted in an election.

"Polling officer" means a person appointed by the election supervisor to verify voter eligibility, assure compliance with this rule in and around the polling place, issue ballots, count ballots, and verify the unofficial ballot count in writing to conservation district supervisors. The polling officer must not have a conflict of interest with any candidate, board supervisor, or conservation district staff.

"Poll site" and "polling site" means a location where votes are collected in a ballot box.

"Poll-site election" and "walk-in election" means an election in which a voter signs in on a poll list, receives a ballot from a polling officer, enters a vote for a candidate on the ballot, and places the ballot in a ballot box at a polling place supervised or monitored by polling officers.

"Provisional ballot" (~~or "contested ballot"~~) means a paper ballot issued to a voter whose qualifications as a qualified district elector cannot be determined at the time the paper ballot is issued. A provisional ballot consists of two envelopes and a paper ballot. A provisional ballot must be distinguished from a regular ballot. Methods that can be used to distinguish a provisional ballot from a regular ballot include printing "PROVISIONAL" on the ballot, using different colored paper or ink, by a combination of these methods, or other methods that serve to distinguish a provisional ballot from a regular ballot. A provisional ballot will be tallied only if the polling officer can verify that the voter is a qualified district elector after the ballot is returned.

"Qualified district elector" means a registered voter in the county where the district is located and who resides within the conservation district boundary. (~~Qualified district elector means an individual residing within the boundary of the conservation district and registered to vote in a county where the conservation district is located.~~)

"Remote election" means an election in which ballots are returned by some means other than for a poll-site election. A mail-in election is a type of remote election.

"Short term" or "short term of office" means a term of office less than three years in duration.

"Significant noncompliance" means the failure to follow the requirements in this rule that may affect the outcome of an election or deny voters their right of privacy in voting.

"Supervisor" means an elected or appointed board member of a local conservation district governing board, in which the governing board is referred to as the board of supervisors.

"Supervisor-elect" means a supervisor who received more valid votes than any of the other candidates running for the same position in a conservation district election, but the election has not yet been certified by the conservation commission.

"Tie" or "election tie" means an election where no candidate has received a simple majority of votes cast by qualified district electors, and two or more candidates have received the same number of votes cast by qualified district electors.

"Undeclared write-in candidate" means an individual who has not submitted required candidate information to the conservation district and who has not submitted a qualified nominating petition by the filing deadline.

"Voter" means a person who submits a ballot in a conservation district election.

"Withdrawal of candidacy" and "to withdraw" means a written notice, signed and dated by the candidate, and delivered to the conservation district, stating the person's desire to be removed from consideration for the office of conservation district supervisor.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 20-19-122, filed 9/21/20, effective 10/22/20)

WAC 135-110-230 Conservation district appoints election supervisor. (1) The conservation district supervisors must appoint a person or firm as the election supervisor and may also appoint the election supervisor's alternate.

(2) The election supervisor:

(a) Serves as the primary point of contact between the conservation district and the conservation commission for the conservation district election;

(b) Organizes, coordinates, and facilitates election-related activities of the conservation district;

(c) Assures that required election procedures are properly conducted;

(d) Assures that required information is properly transmitted to the conservation commission; and

(e) Shall be trained in election policy and procedure as per conservation commission requirements.

(3) Conservation district supervisors remain responsible for conducting an election in compliance with this section.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 10-21-084, filed 10/19/10, effective 11/19/10)

WAC 135-110-400 Conservation district to obtain list of registered voters. ~~((By the first election day))~~ (1) Before a ballot request is fulfilled, the conservation district must obtain a current list of registered voters from the county auditor, secretary of state, or county elections office, department, or division for all territory within the conservation district boundary.

(2) Before tallying votes, the conservation district must obtain an updated list for the final day ballots are due to account for all qualified district electors that register to vote or update their voter registration in time for the election.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 20-19-122, filed 9/21/20, effective 10/22/20)

WAC 135-110-410 Conservation district must set deadline for ~~((requesting ballots be mailed or sent))~~ a voter to request a ballot. To provide sufficient time for voters to obtain and return ballots to the conservation district, and for the conservation district to fulfill a ballot request, the conservation district must set a reasonable deadline for a voter((s)) to request a ballot ~~((be sent or mailed to them))~~.

NEW SECTION

WAC 135-110-415 Fulfilling a ballot request. (1) A voter must provide information sufficient for the conservation district to verify an individual is a qualified district elector in the conservation district election before fulfilling a ballot request. The voter will be required to sign an attestation declaring themselves to be the voter for whom the ballot was issued and that they reasonably believe they are a registered voter in the conservation district boundary.

(2) A polling officer or the election supervisor must verify that a voter is a qualified district elector prior to providing a ballot.

(3) If the polling officer or the election supervisor cannot verify an individual is a qualified district elector, the voter shall be issued a provisional ballot.

(4) Only one ballot request per voter will be fulfilled. A voter who requests another ballot after a request has been fulfilled by the conservation district must be issued a provisional ballot, and the

first ballot tallied by the conservation district is the only ballot that counts for that voter.

(5) Districts are required to track when a voter requests a provisional ballot. When processing a provisional ballot, the polling officer or election supervisor must review the voter information on the outer envelope and confirm that the voter had requested a provisional ballot. If this cannot be confirmed, the ballot will be disqualified.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 10-21-084, filed 10/19/10, effective 11/19/10)

WAC 135-110-420 ~~((Conservation district must not use certain lists.))~~ **Providing unrequested ballots.** If a conservation district provides unrequested ballots ~~((to a population that is less than all the eligible voters)),~~ the conservation district must send ballots to every eligible qualified district elector within the conservation district boundary~~((, the conservation district must not use lists obtained from an individual conservation district supervisor or employee, nor from any candidate, nor from any trade, company, church, union, fraternal or other organization))~~.

NEW SECTION

WAC 135-110-425 Requested ballot lists. A conservation district may create, retain, maintain, and use a list of voters who request ballots be provided to them before each election. The conservation district must verify that each voter on the list is a qualified district elector before sending that voter a ballot. Any voter on the list who cannot be verified by the conservation district must be issued a provisional ballot.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 20-19-122, filed 9/21/20, effective 10/22/20)

WAC 135-110-460 Polling officers verify voters, issue ballots and count votes. (1) During poll-site, mail-in, remote, or any combination of these methods of election, a polling officer must verify a voter is a qualified district elector before issuing a ballot to the voter. If a polling officer cannot verify a voter is a qualified district elector before a ballot is issued, a provisional ballot shall be issued to the voter. The election supervisor may also perform these functions.

(2) At a poll-site election, at least two polling officers must be present and in control of the ballot box(es) at all times while the polls are open.

(3) At a poll-site election, a provisional ballot must be issued if the voter's eligibility to vote cannot be determined during poll-

ing. A voter whose eligibility cannot be determined may only vote on a provisional ballot.

(4) Polling officers count votes cast by voters.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 20-19-122, filed 9/21/20, effective 10/22/20)

WAC 135-110-520 ((Ballots must be provided on)) Conservation districts must provide ballots on request and verify that an individual is a qualified district elector before fulfilling a request. (1) ~~Ballots must be provided to eligible voters upon request((, and voters need not provide proof of any special condition to obtain a ballot)). A voter must provide information sufficient for the conservation district to verify the individual is a qualified district elector in the conservation district election before fulfilling a ballot request. If a conservation district cannot verify an individual is a qualified district elector, the voter shall be issued a provisional ballot.~~

(2) Ballots may be returned to the conservation district by mail, by personal delivery, or by electronic means previously approved by the election supervisor.

(3) Ballots may be provided electronically if a suitable means of determining voter eligibility and preventing voter fraud are utilized.

(4) ~~((At a poll-site))~~ During an election, a provisional ballot shall be provided to any individual wishing to vote when the individual cannot be verified as eligible to vote prior to the issuance of a ballot.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 10-21-084, filed 10/19/10, effective 11/19/10)

WAC 135-110-550 Poll lists must be used. (1) In every conservation district election, the conservation district must create a record of who has submitted a ballot and whether the person was found eligible or ineligible to vote.

(2) Each poll list must contain:

(a) The name of the conservation district;

(b) Whether the poll list is for a poll-site ~~((or))~~, mail-in, remote, or a combination of these election methods, and if a poll-site election, the location of the poll site and the date of polling must be specified;

(3) For poll lists at poll sites, each voter must provide:

(a) His or her name, sufficient to allow identification in the voter registration list;

(b) An address sufficient to allow identification in the voter registration list; and

(c) The signature of the voter.

(4) For poll lists in mail-in elections, the name and address of the voter must be recorded.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 20-19-122, filed 9/21/20, effective 10/22/20)

WAC 135-110-620 Conservation district must provide polling officers at each poll site. The conservation district must provide at least two polling officers at each poll site(~~(, except)~~). The election supervisor (~~(or their designee)~~) may substitute for one polling officer at one poll site.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 20-19-122, filed 9/21/20, effective 10/22/20)

WAC 135-110-640 Conservation district must assure privacy in voting. (1) The ballot choice made by a voter must not be seen by any other person during the act of voting or the placing of the ballot in the ballot box, except in circumstances necessary to allow a disabled voter to cast their ballot, as set out in WAC 135-110-250.

(2) During a poll-site election, paper ballots must be placed into the ballot ((boxes)) box by the voter. Electronic ballots must assure at least the same level of security and privacy as provided by paper balloting.

Concise Explanatory Statement

Summary of Rulemaking and Response to Public Comment

Chapter 135-110 WAC

Election and Replacement of Conservation District Supervisors

September 2026

Background

The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) is required by RCW 89.08.190 to adopt procedures for conservation district elections. These procedures are adopted through Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Chapter 135-110: *Election and Replacement of Conservation District Supervisors*.

At the March 2026 business meeting, the SCC's Board of Commissioners ("Commission") authorized staff to begin a rulemaking for WAC Chapter 135-110. This action was taken due to recent litigation related to conservation district elections in Thurston County Superior Court. SCC makes these changes to address issues arising from that litigation.

This Concise Explanatory Statement provides information about SCC's changes to WAC Chapter 135-110 and fulfills the responsibility under the Administrative Procedure Act to provide the reasons for adopting the rules, any difference between proposed rules and adopted rules, and a response to public comments.

Reasons for Adopting the Rules

On December 12, 2025, the Thurston County Superior Court resolved a lawsuit involving the SCC and its certification of the Clallam Conservation District election of 2024. Following the lawsuit, SCC has begun rulemaking to address the issues in that litigation.

The revised rules clarify how a conservation district fulfills a ballot request in elections that are not exclusively poll-site elections and address inconsistencies in the WAC. Additional reasons for the proposed changes are:

- The proposed changes would protect the integrity of conservation district elections by providing clarity, certainty, and uniformity in requiring districts to verify a voter's eligibility before fulfilling a ballot request, ensure that just one ballot is provided to a verified voter, and ensure that each ballot is again verified as coming from an eligible voter when it is tallied.
- The proposed changes would provide uniformity by requiring all conservation district elections to fulfill ballot requests using the same methods, resulting in more consistency in district elections.
- Verifying voters before providing a ballot more closely aligns with how ballots are provided for the general election so that the public, candidates, and others would have more certainty that a ballot is provided to verified voters.

Summary of Rulemaking Activities

SCC announced the rulemaking by filing the CR-101 with the Office of the Code Revisor on March 26, 2026. The CR-102, which contained the draft changes to WAC 135-110, was filed on May 27, 2026, and published in the Washington State Register Issue 26-12-037 on June 17, 2026.

SCC opened the public comment period from June 17 through July 31, 2026, inviting public comment through e-mail, US mail, and an online form designed to support the rulemaking process. A public hearing was held in Lacey, WA on July 30, 2026, with the opportunity to attend either in person or virtually. All public comments were considered for the adopted rules.

All information for the rulemaking process, including a background document, draft changes to WAC 135-110, and information for public comment, is available online at <https://www.scc.wa.gov/rulemaking>

Difference Between Proposed and Adopted Rules

The following table shows how the final adopted rules have been changed from the draft rules originally published with the Office of the Code Revisor. These changes are the result of feedback received through public comment. They were adopted to ensure clarity and consistency and to meet the intent of relevant statutes.

WAC	Proposed change filed with CR-102	Final adopted rule	Reason for Change
135-110-110	<u>"Designee" means a person trained in the specific duties or roles of the election supervisor and appointed by the conservation district supervisors to perform those specific duties or roles on behalf of the election supervisor when the election supervisor is unavailable. The designee assumes the responsibilities of the election supervisor, ensuring that necessary tasks are completed even when the election supervisor is unavailable.</u>	<u>"Alternate" means a person appointed by the conservation district board of supervisors to serve as the alternate to the election supervisor. The alternate should be trained in the role and specific duties of the election supervisor. Should the election supervisor become unavailable, the alternate will ensure necessary tasks are completed to conduct the election.</u>	This change uses the more common word "alternate" and simplifies the definition.
135-110-110	No change initially proposed to this definition.	"Polling officer" means a person appointed by the election supervisor to verify voter eligibility, assure compliance with this rule in and around the polling place, issue ballots, count ballots, and verify the unofficial ballot count in writing to conservation district supervisors. <u>The polling officer must not have a conflict of interest with any candidate, board supervisor, or conservation district staff.</u>	Upon reflection of the public comments received, it was determined that this change was needed to clarify that polling officers must not have a conflict of interest tied to the outcome of the election.
135-110-110	No change initially proposed to this definition.	<u>"Provisional ballot" or "contested ballot"</u> means a paper ballot issued to a voter whose qualifications as a qualified district elector cannot be determined at the time the paper ballot is issued. A provisional ballot consists of two envelopes and a paper ballot. <u>A provisional ballot must be distinguished from a regular</u>	This change is to address concerns that a provisional ballot would not be distinguishable from a regular ballot. It also clarifies when a provisional ballot is submitted, the

		<u>ballot. Methods that can be used to distinguish a provisional ballot from a regular ballot include printing 'PROVISIONAL' on the ballot, using different colored paper or ink, by a combination of these methods, or other methods that serve to distinguish a provisional ballot from a regular ballot. A provisional ballot will be tallied only if the polling officer can verify that the voter is a qualified district elector after the ballot is returned.</u>	polling officer will again attempt to verify that the voter is eligible. If they are unable to, the provisional ballot will not be tallied.
135-110-230	WAC 135-110-230 Conservation district appoints election supervisor. (1) The conservation district supervisors must appoint a person or firm as the election supervisor and may also appoint the election supervisor's designee.	WAC 135-110-230 Conservation district appoints election supervisor. (1) The conservation district supervisors must appoint a person or firm as the election supervisor and may also appoint the election supervisor's <u>alternate.</u> designee.	This change revises the WAC to use “alternate,” updated from “designee.”
135-110-400	WAC 135-110-400 Conservation district to obtain list of registered voters. (By the first election day) <u>Before a ballot request is fulfilled,</u> the conservation district must obtain a current list of registered voters from the county auditor, secretary of state, or county elections offices, departments, or divisions for all territory within the conservation district boundary.	WAC 135-110-400 Conservation district to obtain list of registered voters. (By the first election day) <u>(1) Before a ballot request is fulfilled,</u> the conservation district must obtain a current list of registered voters from the county auditor, secretary of state, or county elections offices, departments, or divisions for all territory within the conservation district boundary. <u>(2) Before tallying votes, the conservation district must obtain an updated list for the final day ballots are due to account for all qualified district electors that register to vote or update their voter registration in time for the election.</u>	This change puts “office, department, or division” into a singular tense. It also clarifies a conservation district must use a current list of registered voters to fulfill ballot requests, and an updated list to account for all voters who register or update their voter registration in time for the election.
135-110-415	WAC 135-110-415 Fulfilling a ballot request. (1) A voter must provide information sufficient for the conservation district to verify an individual is a qualified district elector in the	WAC 135-110-415 Fulfilling a ballot request. (1) A voter must provide information sufficient for the conservation district to verify an individual is a qualified district elector in the	This moves the proposed change from WAC 135-110-620 to a more appropriate section. It has

	conservation district election before fulfilling a ballot request. (2) If a conservation district cannot verify an individual is a qualified district elector, the voter shall be issued a provisional ballot. (3) Only one ballot request per voter will be fulfilled. A voter who requests another ballot after a request has been fulfilled by the conservation district must be issued a provisional ballot, and the first ballot tallied by the conservation district is the only ballot that counts for that voter.	conservation district election before fulfilling a ballot request. <u>The voter will be required to sign an attestation declaring themselves to be the voter for whom the ballot was issued and that they reasonably believe they are a registered voter in the conservation district boundary.</u> <u>(2) A polling officer or the election supervisor must verify that a voter is a qualified district elector prior to providing a ballot.</u> <u>(23) If the polling officer or the election supervisor a conservation district cannot verify an individual is a qualified district elector, the voter shall be issued a provisional ballot.</u> <u>(34) Only one ballot request per voter will be fulfilled. A voter who requests another ballot after a request has been fulfilled by the conservation district must be issued a provisional ballot, and the first ballot tallied by the conservation district is the only ballot that counts for that voter.</u> <u>(5) Districts are required to track when a voter requests a provisional ballot. When processing a provisional ballot, the polling officer or election supervisor must review the voter information on the outer envelope and confirm that the voter had requested a provisional ballot. If this cannot be confirmed, the ballot will be disqualified.</u>	also changed from requiring two polling officers (or one polling officer and the election supervisor) to requiring one polling officer or the election supervisor to address administrative concerns. This change clarifies that districts are required to track when a voter requests a provisional ballot and ensure that any voter who returns a provisional ballot had requested one.
135-110-420	WAC 135-110-420 Conservation district must not use certain lists. If a conservation district provides unrequested ballots to a population that is less than all the eligible voters within the conservation district	WAC 135-110-420 Conservation district must not use certain lists Providing unrequested ballots. If a conservation district provides unrequested ballots, <u>the conservation district must send ballots to</u>	This change addresses a concern that allowing conservation districts to manage self-maintained lists for unrequested

	boundary, the conservation district must not use lists obtained from an individual conservation district supervisor or employee, nor from any candidate, nor from any trade, company, church, union, fraternal or other organization , <u>and the conservation district must verify that each voter on the list is a qualified district elector before sending that voter a ballot. Any voter on the list who can not be verified as a qualified district elector by the conservation district must be removed from the list and the ballot not provided to that voter.</u>	every eligible qualified district elector to a population that is less than all the eligible voters within the conservation district boundary, the conservation district must not use lists obtained from an individual conservation district supervisor or employee, nor from any candidate, nor from any trade, company, church, union, fraternal or other organization.	ballots could be problematic for district elections.
135-110-620	WAC 135-110-620 Conservation district must provide polling officers at each poll site and during the ballot request verification process in mail-in elections. The conservation district must provide at least two polling officers at each poll site, except the election supervisor or their designee may substitute for one polling officer at one poll site. <u>The conservation district must provide at least two polling officers during a mail-in election when the conservation district is verifying voter eligibility during the ballot request fulfillment process. The election supervisor may perform these functions in place of one of the polling officers.</u>	WAC 135-110-620 Conservation district must provide polling officers at each poll site. The conservation district must provide at least two polling officers at each poll site.; except tThe election supervisor or their designee may substitute for one polling officer at one poll site.	The proposed change to this WAC was misplaced. It has been incorporated into 135-110-415 above with a modification. “Designee” has been removed from the original version of this WAC, as the alternate for the election supervisor is only permitted to perform these tasks if the election supervisor becomes unavailable, per the definition of “alternate.”

Response to Public Comment

Below is a table with all comments and their responses. The comments are organized by the following topics: provisional ballots, voter eligibility, voter lists, administrative burden, and general comments.

#	WAC	Highlighted text from proposed change	Comment	Response
Provisional ballots				
1	110	"Provisional ballot" or "contested ballot" means -110a paper ballot issued to a voter whose qualifications as a qualified district elector cannot be determined at the time the paper ballot is issued.	The definition of provisional ballot provides for no physical difference between it and a regular ballot. As such, a provisional ballot may be treated as a regular ballot and tabulated upon being cast. This loophole should be closed.	While the definition of "provisional ballot" is not being revised, there are other provisions in the changes to WAC 135-110 that do use this definition. As a result, the SCC agrees that more specificity would be helpful. We have added the following to this definition: <u>“A provisional ballot must be distinguished from a regular ballot by the conservation district. Methods that can be used to distinguish a provisional ballot from a regular ballot include printing 'PROVISIONAL' on the ballot, using different colored paper or ink, by a combination of these methods, or other methods that serve to distinguish a provisional ballot from a regular ballot. A provisional ballot will be tallied only if the polling officer can verify that the voter is a qualified district elector after the ballot is returned.”</u>

2	415	<u>(2) If a conservation district cannot verify an individual is a qualified district elector, the voter shall be issued a provisional ballot.</u>	Since there is no physical difference between provisional and regular ballots, this is an open invitation for voter fraud and election fraud.	Response #1 addresses this concern.
3	415	<u>(3) Only one ballot request per voter will be fulfilled. A voter who requests another ballot after a request has been fulfilled by the conservation district must be issued a provisional ballot, and the first ballot tallied by the conservation district is the only ballot that counts for that voter.</u>	This is another open invitation for voter and/or election fraud. Ballots are not voter specific (no bar codes like the ballots for general elections). They may readily be handed to friends or family who will vote for the 'right' candidate. Very large loophole for getting more ballots after the ballot request deadline.	SCC has revised this new rule to include: <u>(4) Districts are required to track when a voter requests a provisional ballot. When processing a provisional ballot, the polling officer or election supervisor must review the voter information on the outer envelope and confirm that the voter had requested a provisional ballot. If this cannot be confirmed, the ballot will be disqualified.</u>
4	425	<u>Any voter on the list who cannot be verified by the conservation district must be issued a provisional ballot.</u>	Internally inconsistent proposed amendments. In one instance, the voter is removed from the list and not provided a ballot. In the next breath, the voter is issued a provisional ballot. The SCC must either get serious about election integrity, or give up running elections.	WAC 135-110-420 and WAC 135-110-425 serve different purposes. Concerns about provisional ballot have been addressed in response #1.
5	460	If a polling officer cannot verify a voter is a qualified district elector before a ballot is issued, a provisional ballot shall be issued	Yet more internal inconsistencies with regard to voter eligibility and provisional ballots (which are no	Responses #1 and #3 address this concern.

		to the voter. <u>The election supervisor may also perform these functions.</u>	different in appearance than regular ballots).	
6	460	(3) At a poll-site election, a provisional ballot must be issued if the voter's eligibility to vote cannot be determined during polling. A voter whose eligibility cannot be determined may only vote on a provisional ballot.	More inconsistencies as to eligibility and provisional ballots. The loophole on issuing provisional ballots seems to be large enough to drive a truck through. The message is clear: eligibility is optional; you can vote either way.	Responses #1 and #3 address this concern.
7	520	<u>If a conservation district cannot verify an individual is a qualified district elector, the voter shall be issued a provisional ballot.</u>	Yet more internal inconsistencies relating to the issuance of provisional ballots.	Responses #1 and #3 address this concern. The updates to the WAC pertaining to provisional ballots addresses concerns about inconsistency.
8	520	(4) ((At a poll-site)) During an election, a provisional ballot shall be provided to any individual wishing to vote when the individual cannot be verified as eligible to vote prior to the issuance of a ballot.	Yet more internal inconsistencies. Are provisional ballots to be issued regardless of what the election resolution states? What if there is a deadline for requesting ballots? What does “during an” election mean? When does an SCC election start? When does it end?	Conservation districts are permitted to establish their procedures for their election within the parameters set by the WAC, including WAC 135-110-210, which requires a resolution to establish the election, and 135-110-410, which requires a deadline for requesting ballots.
9	N/A	N/A	This comment was provided twice through email and the rulemaking comment form. In several places there is mention of the issuing of a provisional ballot, which cannot be counted. What is	The changes related to provisional ballots seek to clarify that at any time a voter's eligibility cannot be determined or the voter makes a second request for a ballot, then the conservation district would issue a provisional ballot to the voter.

			the logic of issuing a ballot that cannot be counted? If the postal system screwed up delivery, I fully get the voter being issued a provisional ballot that will be counted. If you cast a regular ballot and still requested a provisional (that cannot be counted), I do not understand that logic.	WAC 135-110-110 has been updated as described in response #1. WAC 135-110-415 states: “Only one ballot request per voter will be fulfilled. A voter who requests another ballot after a request has been fulfilled by the conservation district must be issued a provisional ballot, and the first ballot tallied by the conservation district is the only ballot that counts for that voter.”
Comments on voter eligibility				
10	110	"Voter" means a person who submits a ballot in a conservation district election.	Notice the lack of eligibility in this definition. The word “person” should read “qualified district elector”	Changes to this WAC include revisions to determine eligibility when a ballot request is fulfilled. However, the final determination occurs when a ballot is received and processed. For example, a voter’s registration status may change if they change their address on their voter registration to a location outside the district after receiving their ballot, but before election day. A voter may also submit a provisional ballot to have their eligibility determined on election day.
11	520	<u>A voter must provide information sufficient for the conservation district to verify the individual is a qualified district elector in the conservation district election before fulfilling a ballot request.</u>	This term is so vague as to be meaningless.	Conservation districts must have sufficient information to compare to the official list of registered voters. This is typically a name and address. New language has been added to

				WAC 135-110-415 to require voter attestation when voting in conservation district elections.
12	550	(2) Each poll list must contain: (a) The name of the conservation district; (b) Whether the poll list is for a poll-site (for), mail-in, <u>remote, or a combination of these election methods</u>, and if a poll-site election, the location of the poll site and the date of polling must be specified; (3) For poll lists at poll sites, each voter must provide: (a) His or her name, sufficient to allow identification in the voter registration list; (b) An address sufficient to allow identification in the voter registration list; and (c) The signature of the voter. (4) For poll lists in mail-in elections, the name and address of the voter must be recorded.	Since the districts do no signature verification (and request no voter ID), this is meaningless. It's all for show. Anyone may access the voter registration list and vote in any district election using a false identity. There is an alarming lack of concern over election security in SCC/district elections.	Response #11 addresses this concern.
13	640	(2) <u>During a poll-site election</u>, paper ballots must be placed into the ballot (boxes) <u>box by the voter</u>.	No such requirement exists for mail-in elections. There is no signature verification, no unique bar code for the voter, rendering the mail-in process from request to submission an open invitation for both voter fraud and election fraud.	Response #11 addresses this concern.

Comments on voter lists				
14	420	If a conservation district provides unrequested ballots to a population that is less than all the eligible voters within the conservation district boundary, the conservation district must not use lists obtained from an individual conservation district supervisor or employee, nor from any candidate, nor from any trade, company, church, union, fraternal or other organization, <u>and the conservation district must verify that each voter on the list is a qualified district elector before sending that voter a ballot.</u>	The CCD used an internal list to send unauthorized ballots to non-requestors for the 2026 Election. The concept of limiting the voting population to self-maintained lists is entirely open to manipulation and abuse.	SCC has revised this change to strike the initial amendment language and make the following change for clarity when a conservation district is sending ballots to voters who have not requested a ballot: " If a conservation district provides unrequested ballots, <u>the conservation district must send ballots to every eligible qualified district elector to a population that is less than all the eligible voters</u> within the conservation district boundary, the conservation district must not use lists obtained from an individual conservation district supervisor or employee, nor from any candidate, nor from any trade, company, church, union, fraternal or other organization.
15	420	<u>Any voter on the list who cannot be verified as a qualified district elector by the conservation district must be removed from the list and the ballot not provided to that voter.</u>	This proposed amendment is internally inconsistent with various WACs permitting the use of 'provisional' ballots. As usual, it sounds 'nice', but is not harmonized with the rest of the WACs, thereby creating enough 'gray' area for systemic election fraud.	SCC will strike this proposed language to align with the revision described in response #14.

Comments on administrative burden				
16	110	N/A	Conservation district elections are complex and require far more than simply reading WAC 135-110, Commission guidance, or written procedures. The practical knowledge needed to administer an election comes from hands-on participation throughout the full election cycle. For that reason, WAC 135.110 should reflect that the Election Supervisor designee should be allowed to serve as a polling officer even if they are a CD staff member. The "designee" should receive practical, real-time training in the duties required to conduct and oversee the election. Allowing an election designee (or possibly a Deputy election supervisor) to participate throughout the whole process would strengthen compliance, reduce administrative errors, and help ensure that conservation district elections are	The definition for “alternate” (formerly “designee” – that term is updated in the adopted WAC) introduced through this rulemaking process is important to maintain impartial and independent administration of conservation district elections by having minimal staff engaged in the process. However, to address the administrative burden expressed, SCC has updated the WAC to no longer require two polling officers or one polling officer and the election supervisor to verify that someone is a qualified district elector prior to fulfilling a ballot request. SCC will only require one person for this task. This is now reflected in WAC 135-110-425: <u>(2) A polling officer or the election supervisor must verify that a voter is a qualified district elector prior to providing a ballot.</u> SCC is comfortable with this change since voter eligibility will again be determined when ballots are processed.

			conducted consistently and lawfully. This would require WAC 135-110 to clearly authorize the Election designee role to be a polling officer including when the designee is a district employee.	
17	460	(1) <u>During poll-site, mail-in, remote, or any combination of these methods of election</u>, a polling officer must verify a voter is a qualified district elector before issuing a ballot to the voter.	I received notice that the CCD office administrator was sending out ballots for the 2026 CCD Election. Employees may not be polling officers. Are the districts prepared to hire polling officers to be on-site for weeks on end to handle these elections? The real-life logistics of running these elections is incompatible with these rules. The CCD election supervisor seems to be sending this message to the SCC and the SCC is seemingly not listening.	SCC is aware that the changes could require additional time and effort for the election supervisor and polling officer(s) to verify each voter when ballot requests are fulfilled.
18	520	WAC 135-110-520 (Ballots must be provided on) <u>Conservation districts must provide ballots on request and verify that an individual is a qualified district elector before fulfilling a request.</u>	This proposed amendment is inconsistent with the supervisors setting deadlines, such as a deadline to request a ballot. Are ballots to be issued upon demand regardless of what the election	The amendments to WAC 135-110-520 are designed to reinforce the requirement for each conservation district that, regardless of the type of election held, must verify that the individual who requests a ballot is a qualified district elector before a ballot can be

			resolution states? At any time? During business hours and after hours (as has happened at CCD offices)? Will a polling officer be available at all times to determine eligibility? This practice was abused by the CCD for the 2024 and 2025 Elections.	provided. Conservation districts are permitted to establish their procedures for fulfilling a ballot request, which could include having the polling officer or election supervisor available in the office to process requests as they come in, or processing requests in batches when the polling officer or election supervisor are available.
19	620	The conservation district must provide at least two polling officers at each poll site, except the election supervisor or their designee may substitute for one polling officer at one poll site. <u>The conservation district must provide at least two polling officers during a mail-in election when the conservation district is verifying voter eligibility during the ballot request fulfillment process. The election supervisor may perform these functions in place of one of the polling officers.</u>	See earlier comment. This is a good effort to solve the issue of employees handling elections. But budget-wise, do the districts have the resources to pay for two polling officers to be on hand at all times for weeks on end? Or will the tasks naturally fall to the employees on site? The SCC has to think about what is realistically possible for the districts to handle. Perhaps the SCC should send polling officers to handle district elections? If the SCC does not have the staff to run 40+ elections, then it should find the funding to move the elections to the general ballot. The time has come.	Response #33 addressed this concern.
General comments				

20	110	"Canvass" and "canvassing" means to examine carefully or scrutinize the election returns for authenticity and proper count.	The SCC does not appear to canvass results per this definition. The SCC seemingly accepts the vote totals from the district elections and 'certifies' based thereon. The SCC's involvement with elections appears to be limited to email/phone support and limited personal observation from outside the election room during tabulation.	Since no changes to the definition of "canvass" or "canvassing" are included in the changes to WAC Chapter 135-110, this comment goes beyond the scope of the current rulemaking process.
21	110	<u>"Designee" means a person trained in the specific duties or roles of the election supervisor and appointed by the conservation district supervisors to perform those specific duties or roles on behalf of the election supervisor when the election supervisor is unavailable. The designee assumes the responsibilities of the election supervisor, ensuring that necessary tasks are completed even when the election supervisor is unavailable.</u>	CCD hired an election assistant for the 2025 and 2026 elections. For the 2026 CCD Election, the election supervisor left the room and was primarily absent during the ballot verification process that I observed. In her absence, I witnessed multiple volunteers working by themselves (not in pairs) to authenticate ballots (with a swipe of a marker). This proposed amendment will make it much easier for the election supervisors to be absent leading to concerns over election integrity and accountability.	This addition to WAC Chapter 135-110 is designed to allow for a trained person to take over the duties of the election supervisor in limited circumstances. The intention of this addition, in conjunction with the change to WAC 135-110-230(1), is to ensure that when an election supervisor is unavailable to perform their duties, another person can assume those responsibilities.
22	110	Only the conservation district board of supervisors may set election dates and appoint the election supervisor.	This provision limits the setting of election dates to the supervisors, but in reality, the districts feel	Since no changes to the definition of "election supervisor" are included in the changes to WAC Chapter 135-110, this comment goes

			emboldened to ignore their own deadlines. Example from 2026 CCD Election: contrary to a clearly noticed deadline in the Election Resolution to request a mail-in ballot by a set date and time, the CCD mailed hundreds of ballots to non-requestors based on an internal list. The SCC has stalled the investigation of these allegations.	beyond the scope of the current rulemaking process.
23	110	"Mail-in election" means an election in which mail-in ballots are provided before election day to qualified voters.	But additional ballots are mailed to non-qualified voters, as was the case for the 2026 CCD Election.	Since no changes to the definition of "Mail-in election" are included in the changes to WAC Chapter 135-110, this comment goes beyond the scope of the current rulemaking process.
24	110	"Neglect of duty" means failure by a supervisor or supervisors to perform mandatory duties. Such duties include, but are not limited to: (a) Compliance with laws and rules imposed by local, state, and federal government entities; (b) Attendance at a sufficient number of board meetings so as to not impede the work of the conservation district;	District supervisors openly disparage members of the public who raise election procedure concerns or who raise other legal concerns such as a lack of compliance with federal grant contract terms. The conduct reflects poorly on the districts and the SCC.	Since no changes to the definition of "Neglect of duty" are included in the changes to WAC Chapter 135-110, this comment goes beyond the scope of the current rulemaking process.
25	110	"Remote election" means an election in which ballots are returned by some means other than for a poll-site election.	This definition appears aimed at permitting electronic elections. Electronic voting is inconsistent with the constitution's requirement	Since no changes to the definition of "remote election" are included in the changes to WAC

			that all elections “shall be by ballot” and that the legislature must provide for a method of voting that secures to every elector absolute secrecy in preparing and depositing the ballot. There is no way to hide the elector’s identity with an electronically submitted vote.	Chapter 135-110, this comment goes beyond the scope of the current rulemaking process.
26	110	"Significant noncompliance" means the failure to follow the requirements in this rule that may affect the outcome of an election or deny voters their right of privacy in voting.	With respect to the 2026 CCD Election, upon information and belief, the CCD examined the identify of voters who had requested a ballot, and based on the perceived political leanings of those prospective voters, decided to mail out additional ballots to non-requestors. The expansion of the voting population was based on a privacy breach for those who had timely requested a ballot. This is just one reason why privacy in voting is essential and constitutionally protected. The SCC has stalled the investigation of these allegations.	Since no changes to the definition of "significant noncompliance" are included in the changes to WAC Chapter 135-110, this comment goes beyond the scope of the current rulemaking process.
27	230	(2) The election supervisor: (a) Serves as the primary point of contact between the conservation district and the conservation commission for the	This section demonstrates the lack of clear accountability for district elections. Is it the election supervisor (who has to conduct	The only section of WAC 135-110-230 to be amended is the addition of the phrase, “and may also appoint the election supervisor’s designee” (now changed to “alternate”) at the

		conservation district election; (c) Assures that required election procedures are properly conducted; (3) Conservation district supervisors remain responsible for conducting an election in compliance with this section.	elections for their own bosses which is a clear conflict of interest) or the district supervisors? If supervisors are responsible for conducting the election, where is the line drawn for supervisors who are also candidates? It would appear from the 2026 CCD Election that the supervisor candidate was involved with the decision to expand the voting population (to her favor), as she was the person who publicly revealed the scheme. The internal conflicts of interest render district elections virtually impossible to properly and independently conduct. This is just one reason why the public has asked that these elections be put on the general ballot.	end of Section (1). No part of the comment addresses that amendment, so this comment goes beyond the scope of the current rulemaking process.
28	400	((By the first election day)) Before a ballot request is fulfilled, the conservation district must obtain a current list of registered voters from the county auditor, <u>secretary of state, or county elections offices, departments, or divisions</u> for all territory within the conservation district boundary.	This is so open-ended as to be meaningless (and an invitation for election fraud). Per the CCD 2026 election supervisor, she had the county auditor on 'speed dial' due to differences between the registered voter list from the SOS and the County's list. I gathered that the voters missing from the SOS list	Conservation district elections are governed by RCW Chapter 89.08 and WAC Chapter 135-110. Within that framework, SCC allows conservation districts options to conduct their elections by a variety of means, including receiving assistance from County auditors or County elections departments. To comply with WAC 135-110-400, conservation districts will have to obtain a current list of

			were found by the county auditor on the county's list. Since these are county elections, using the county auditor's official list is the most logical choice. This proposed amendment should be rejected.	registered voters. The amendment allows the conservation district to obtain that list from whichever appropriate entity exists within their district.
29	410	WAC 135-110-410 Conservation district must set deadline for (requesting ballots be mailed or sent) a voter to request a ballot.	This is a nice idea, but the CCD did not follow this. The deadline to request a mail in ballot was meaningless for the 2024, 2025 and 2026 elections. The SCC can write any rules it wishes; the districts seem to view compliance as nothing more than a suggestion.	This addition to WAC Chapter 135-110 is designed to add clarity to the voter's requirement to request a ballot and the conservation districts requirement to fulfill a ballot request.
30	520	(3) Ballots may be provided electronically if a suitable means of determining voter eligibility and preventing voter fraud are utilized.	This appears to be another loop-hole for electronic voting that violates the state constitution. Votes cast by email, for instance, are not private.	Since no changes to this sentence are part of the changes to WAC Chapter 135-110, this comment is beyond the scope of the current rulemaking process.
31	520	(3) Ballots may be provided electronically if a suitable means of determining voter eligibility and preventing voter fraud are utilized.	This term is so vague as to be meaningless. It appears the SCC wants to migrate to electronic elections. The SCC may not violate the state constitution.	Since no changes to this sentence are part of the changes to WAC Chapter 135-110, this comment is beyond the scope of the current rulemaking process.
32	640	WAC 135-110-640 Conservation district must assure privacy in voting. (1) The ballot choice made by a voter must not be seen by	Remotely cast votes via email, or other electronic methods, violates this rule.	Since no changes to this sentence are part of the changes to WAC Chapter 135-110, this comment is beyond the scope of the current rulemaking process.

		any other person during the act of voting or the placing of the ballot in the ballot box, except in circumstances necessary to allow a disabled voter to cast their ballot, as set out in WAC 135-110-250.		The second section of WAC 135-110-640 addresses this concern: (2) Paper ballots must be placed into ballot boxes. Electronic ballots must assure at least the same level of security and privacy as provided by paper balloting.
33	640	Electronic ballots must assure at least the same level of security and privacy as provided by paper balloting.	Good sentiment. Impossible to provide in real life.	Since no changes to this sentence are proposed as part of the changes to WAC Chapter 135-110, this comment is beyond the scope of the current rulemaking process.
34	N/A	N/A	While there are procedures detailed, unless I have missed it, there does not seem to be a way to assign explicit responsibility for carrying them out. Perhaps, in announcing the results, the Election Supervisor must sign an affidavit affirming that all procedures, including the verification of voters, were carried out in conformity with the WAC?	Election supervisors in conservation district elections are required to provide an attestation that the information they provide to SCC is accurate and that the election was conducted properly. This is done through their submittal of Election Form #2, which is submitted to SCC after the election. That attestation reads: <i>"By submitting this form, I attest that the district retains all relevant original documents, notices, and/or other materials that support each assertion made herein, and that the information supplied is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I further attest that this election was conducted properly, and I understand that if any portion of the information contained in this form is found to be incorrect, the Conservation</i>

				<i>Commission reserves the right to take appropriate action."</i>
35	110	N/A	This comment was provided twice through email and the rulemaking comment form. WAC 135-110-110, definition of 'Designee'. This definition makes no reference to "or firm" as is made under 135-110-230, on Page 4, line 3. Seems to me that "or firm" ought to be considered for repeal so as to avoid any potential confusion or meaning. "of firm" should appear in both WACS or under neither, unless I'm missing some subtlety.	The conservation district board of supervisors have the duty to appoint an election supervisor. The election supervisor may be a person or firm. If a conservation district chooses to work with a firm, it is unlikely they would need a person to serve as an alternate, though they could choose to appoint that position. The board of supervisors has the option to appoint an alternate (formerly "designee") to fulfill the responsibilities of the election supervisor should they become unavailable. Per the definition, the alternate must be a specific person. It is unlikely that a conservation district would contract with a firm to be trained in conducting their election if that service is ultimately not needed.
36	400	N/A	This comment was provided twice through email and the rulemaking comment form. WAC 135-110-400. I think there is a 'singular vs. plural' issue in the phrasing of this amendatory rule. The title references conservation district in the singular. In Line 5, plural is used for 'offices, departments, or divisions'. I think	SCC has revised this amendment to make a singular reference to "<u>office, department, or division.</u>"

			these references should be in the singular.	
37	410	N/A	This comment was provided twice through email and the rulemaking comment form. WAC 135-0110-410. I don't see, under Definitions, a definition for "reasonable deadline." Has a voter ever challenged not receiving a timely ballot on the basis of the request deadline being unreasonable? I like to anticipate problems and be prepared in advance. Just a thought.	Since no changes to the definition of "reasonable deadline" are included in the changes to WAC Chapter 135-110, this comment goes beyond the scope of the current rulemaking process.
38	425	N/A	Comment provided at public hearing, which are also included in a cover letter sent via email and attached to comments addressed above: Virginia Shogren, Sequim, Washington. I submitted detailed written public comment for this hearing, for which I appreciate your review and consideration. As I stated at the hearing in Thurston County Superior Court in December of 2025, I have yet to have	SCC takes conservation district elections and this rulemaking process seriously. This comment reiterates several concerns addressed above, including concerns about voter eligibility, provisional ballots, lists of voters to receive a ballot, the potential for inconsistency, and language or definitions perceived as vague. All these concerns are addressed in the responses above, and particularly responses #1, #3, #4, #11, #14, #15, #18, and #28 address these comments. Specific attention is given to WAC 135-110-425. The commentor alleges that this new

			confidence in the SCC's ability or desire to oversee clean elections. This rulemaking process only heightens those concerns. As you will see from my specific comments, the WACs, even with the proposed amendments adopted still permit the casting of ballots by ineligible electors. For example, via a provisional ballot or via ballots obtained after a request deadline in an election resolution. The WAC provisions contain vague language and definitions, are internally inconsistent, and as a result are unclear and render compliance difficult, if not impossible. At a recent Clallam Conservation District board meeting, a supervisor suggested that Clallam County return to in-person single-day elections in order to keep costs to a minimum while the legislature considers new statutory language that would allow and provide funding for districts to place their elections on the general ballot. I believe that this suggestion had	WAC is intended to address the procedures of elections that have already occurred. Changes to the WAC will only apply to elections that occur after adoption. WAC 135-110-425 only applies when a voter requests a ballot be sent to them. It does not permit the district or any other entity to create a list of voters to receive ballots who have not requested them. That concern is unrelated to this WAC but still addressed in responses #15 and #16. Regarding your comment on public disclosure requirements, conservation district supervisor candidates are exempt from these requirements through state law. This cannot be changed through the rulemaking process. SCC does not intend to require conservation districts to conduct elections through poll-site only. The WAC are designed to allow conservation districts to conduct elections in a way that encourages broad participation while maintaining the integrity of elections. The attachments mentioned in the cover letter are noted, but do not contain any comments on this rulemaking process.
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			merit. A return to in-person single-day elections would alleviate the issues with hybrid and mail-in elections, which are fraught with both election fraud and voter fraud. Such a return would solve the immediate and pressing budget concerns, and it would allow the districts the time and space to work on legislation that solves all problems. Finally, I want to draw your attention to one proposed new section in particular that is proposed WAC 135-110-425 regarding requested ballot lists. This proposed new provision seems to be aimed at covering up the irregularities from the Clallam County 2026 election, for which I filed an election contest. Adoption of that rule will be used as evidence in the election contest and any litigation following any certification. Clallam County sent hundreds of ballots to non-ballot requesters in violation of its own election resolution.	
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			This proposed amendment would allow anyone within a conservation district to create a list of perceived prior voting friendlies who they want to receive a ballot going forward. This concept of private elections is not going to win the day. Clallam County is now placing an annual lien as to every parcel with its rates and charges taxes. Every eligible voter impacted by those liens should receive a ballot, not just those on insider lists. The only lawful, requested ballot list is the county voter registration list. Please do not adopt WAC 135-110-425. Thank you. Additional comments addressed in the cover letter but not included in the public hearing: The SCC also should be aware that a political party was involved in the 2026 CCD Election, and to my knowledge, granted one candidate an endorsement. Holding public elections in which	
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			political parties are actively involved, but which are not subject to PDC oversight or disclosure requirements, is not a tenable situation. Also enclosed is a recent report regarding the issues with the CCD 2026 Election. Public awareness of problems with SCC elections is growing. I urge the SCC to take action to restrict district elections to in-person, single day elections with Voter ID, as dictated by its election guide. This would allow stakeholders the time and resources to then work with the legislature to move these elections to the general ballot subject to normal election oversight and disclosure requirements.	
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39	230	N/A	Comment provided at public hearing: Kim Williams, Clallam CD: Thank you for the work that you've done today to prepare for today. And I... excuse me, I have a summer cold cough, so my voice is a little squeaky, but I do want to, for the record, note that the claims against Clallam Conservation's election are uncorroborated, and they are not proven. And, so, that needs to be taken into consideration. I also would like to request that as the Commission is considering changes to the WAC 135-110 that, they also consider that two conservation district staff can be polling officers. One of them, usually the elections supervisor, and then another one who could possibly also be the designee or alternate that you are talking about. I cannot imagine putting an alternate into overseeing an election who has not had polling officer training, and they need to, Be involved, to be able to step in if the	Response #16 addresses this comment.
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			election supervisor is not able to. And that's it. Thank you.	
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Rulemaking

Proposed Changes to Conservation District Election Rules (WAC 135-110)

Introduction

At the March 2026 business meeting, the State Conservation Commission (SCC) authorized staff to begin a rulemaking process related to conservation district (CD) elections – [WAC Chapter 135-110](#). This action was taken due to recent litigation related to CD elections in Thurston County Superior Court. Prior to the pursuit of rulemaking, SCC received guidance from our Assistant Attorney General (AAG) for action that might be needed based on the outcome of the lawsuit. Based on that guidance, we are proposing several changes to WAC 135-110 to clarify how a CD fulfills a ballot request during an election.

Background

When the Washington State Legislature enacts a law to authorize a state agency to take on a certain responsibility, agencies may be empowered to establish rules to provide detail and direction on how that law should be carried out. These rules are known as the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). Establishing and amending these rules requires a rulemaking process using procedures and timelines required by the Office of the Code Revisor, which ensures a transparent process and opportunities for public participation.

Through state law, SCC is authorized to establish CD election procedures, “The Commission shall establish procedures for elections, canvass the returns and announce the official results thereof.” ([RCW 89.08.190](#)) To carry out this responsibility, SCC has adopted election rules in WAC Chapter 135-110. The election rules exist to direct districts in the election, appointment, and replacement of supervisors. They also ensure fair treatment of all parties. CDs must comply with these rules for their elections.

SCC cannot make changes to the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) that governs elections through a rulemaking process. Changes to RCW can only occur through the legislative process.

SCC also develops guidance documents that support the implementation of the WAC, including the *Election and Appointment Guide* (EAG). Changes to the WAC will also require updates to these documents. More information on this phase is provided towards the end of this document.

Reason for proposed changes

On December 12, 2025, the Thurston County Superior Court resolved a lawsuit involving the SCC and its certification of the Clallam CD election of 2024. Following the lawsuit, SCC received guidance from our AAG on changes that are needed to address concerns identified in the court order.

Based on guidance from agency legal counsel, SCC staff determined updating the election WAC is necessary to meet the court order. At their March 19 business meeting, SCC

Commissioners authorized staff to begin rulemaking. At the direction of the Commission, this change to WAC will specifically address the outcome of the lawsuit.

The proposed changes focus on clarifying how a CD fulfills a ballot request in elections that are not exclusively poll-site elections and address inconsistencies in our WAC. Additional reasons for the proposed changes are:

- The proposed changes would protect the integrity of CD elections by providing clarity, certainty, and uniformity in requiring CDs to verify a voter's eligibility before fulfilling a ballot request, ensure that just one ballot is provided to a verified voter, and ensure that each ballot is again verified as coming from an eligible voter when it is tallied.
- The proposed changes would provide uniformity by requiring all CDs to fulfill ballot requests using the same methods, resulting in more consistency in CD elections.
- Verifying voters before providing a ballot more closely aligns with how ballots are provided for the general election so that the public, candidates, and others would have more certainty that a ballot is provided to verified voters.

Why not update all election WACs?

Moving forward, SCC is committed to reviewing the election rules and procedures on a regular basis. The changes currently being proposed address specific and timely concerns raised by the Thurston County Superior Court. These changes need to be implemented prior to the next election cycle, and we cannot wait for an overall review of the CD election WAC.

What are the proposed changes?

Proposed changes include the creation of two new rules (WAC 135-110-415 *Fulfilling a Ballot Request* and WAC 135-110-425 *Requested Ballot List*) and amendments to ten WAC sections:

1. WAC 135.110.110 Definitions.
2. WAC 135.110.230 Conservation district appoints elections supervisor.
3. WAC 135.110.400 Conservation district to obtain list of registered voters.
4. WAC 135.110.410 Conservation district must set deadline for requesting ballots be mailed or sent.
5. *WAC 135-110-415 Fulfilling a Ballot Request (NEW)*
6. WAC 135.110.420 Conservation district must not use certain lists.
7. *WAC 135-110-425 Requested Ballot List (NEW)*
8. WAC 135.110.460 Polling officers verify voters, issue ballots and count votes.
9. WAC 135.110.520 Ballots must be provided on request.
10. WAC 135.110.550 Poll lists must be used.
11. WAC 135.110.620 Conservation district must provide polling officers at each poll site.
12. WAC 135.110.640 Conservation district must assure privacy in voting.

[The draft proposed changes can be found here.](#) A summary of proposed changes includes:

1. Establishing that the CD board of supervisors, when appointing an election supervisor to run their election, may also appoint a designee who would be able to perform the same duties if the election supervisor is unavailable. *WAC 135.110.110 and .230.*

2. Requiring that before a ballot request from a voter can be fulfilled, the CD must verify that the voter is a qualified district elector. *WAC 135.110.400, .410, .415 (new), .420, .425 (new), .460, .520, and 550.*
3. Clarifying that a CD can only fulfill a ballot request by a voter by providing that voter with a single ballot, provided that voter has been verified by the CD as a qualified district elector. *WAC 135.110.400, .410, .415 (new), .420, .425 (new), .460, .520, and 550.*
4. Clarifying that in all cases when a voter requests a ballot, if a CD cannot verify the voter is a qualified district elector, the CD shall issue a provisional ballot to that voter. *WAC 135.110.410, .415 (new), .420, .425 (new), .460, .520, and 550.*
5. Requiring that, if a voter requests another ballot after a request has been fulfilled, the CD must issue a provisional ballot, and the first ballot tallied is the only ballot that counts for that voter. *WAC 135-110-415.*
6. Clarifying that only polling officers, and the election supervisor if acting as a polling officer, can verify if a voter is a qualified district elector. *WAC 135.110.400, .410, .415 (new), .420, .425 (new), .460, .520, .550, and .620.*
7. Requiring that, if the CD uses a list as described in WAC 135-110-420 to provide an unrequested ballot to a voter, the CD must verify each voter on that list as a qualified district elector before providing a ballot. *WAC 135-110-420.*
8. Requiring that, if the CD maintains a list from prior years of voters who have requested the CD provide them with a ballot in future elections, the CD must verify each voter on that list is a qualified voter before using that list to fulfill a request in the current election. If the CD cannot verify that a voter on such a list is a qualified district elector, the CD must provide the voter with a provisional ballot. *WAC 135-110-425 (new).*
9. Clarifying that during a poll-site election, a voter must place their ballot into the ballot box themselves. *WAC 135-110-640.*

The proposed changes will require additional time and effort for the election supervisor and polling officer(s) to verify each voter when ballot requests are fulfilled. These duties can only be performed by the CD's election supervisor and polling officers (see WAC 135-110-440).

Effective date of changes

The goal is to have this process done and all election guidance updated before the next election cycle in January - March 2027, which requires the SCC to adopt the suggested updates to the WAC at their September 17 business meeting.

If that happens, these changes will be effective 31 days after the filing of the final rules — approximately October 31, 2026. The final changes will be incorporated into SCC's regular election training for CDs in late September or early October.

Engagement for CDs and the public

SCC must follow the rulemaking process and procedures set out by the OCR and RCW 1.21 when updating or changing WAC 135-110. That process includes notice of the proposed rule changes, a public comment period, public hearing, and then adoption by the commission.

SCC is pursuing multiple methods to provide information about the process and proposed changes to the public and CDs, including:

- [Posting information and updates on the SCC website.](#)
- Engaging with CD managers at the May 14 CD roundtable.
- Providing regular updates at each SCC business meeting.
- Providing an update at Washington Association of District Employees 2026 conference.
- Establishing a public comment period from June 17 through July 31.
- Holding a hybrid public hearing on Thursday, July 30 at 4 p.m. at the Best Western Plus Lacey Inn and Suites, 8326 Quinault Dr NE, Lacey, WA 98516.
- Providing multiple means for comment, including a public hearing, form and email.

How to provide public comment

The official public comment period is June 17 through July 31. Written comments can be submitted through Formstack: <https://www.scc.wa.gov/files/pol-rulemaking-comment-form>

For oral public comments, a hybrid public hearing will be held on Thursday, July 30 at 4 p.m. at [the Best Western Plus Lacey Inn and Suites, 8326 Quinault Dr NE, Lacey, WA 98516](#). The public hearing can be attended virtually. To attend, please register here: www.scc.wa.gov/files/pol-rulemaking-public-hearing

Comments can also be emailed to Bill Eller at beller@scc.wa.gov. **Comments must be received by July 31, 2026, at 5 p.m.**

Changes to SCC guidance documents

SCC also provides other materials to support CDs with the administration of their elections. Those include reporting forms, guides, checklists, policy statements, and others. For example, the *EAG* contains procedures that support CDs in carrying out the WAC. SCC will update those materials shortly after the completion of rulemaking to reflect the changes to the WAC.

We anticipate the proposed changes to these materials coming forward at the SCC business meeting on September 17, after which there will be a 45-day public comment period. Changes to these materials will need to be adopted at the December 3 business meeting so they will be effective for the 2027 election cycle. Training on the update to these materials will be provided for CD election supervisors in early December.

Contact

If you have any questions, please contact: Bill Eller, SCC Special Projects Coordinator, beller@scc.wa.gov, 509-385-7512



Washington State Conservation Commission

September 17, 2026

TO: James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Dani Madrone, Director of Policy and Governmental Affairs

SUBJECT: Updating the Election and Appointment Guide

Action Item

☒

Informational Item

☐

Summary:

The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) has historically treated the *Election and Appointment Guide* as a policy document requiring approval by the Commission. The formal policies and procedures for elections occur through the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 89.08.190 and the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 135-110. Upon reflection, staff would like to treat the *Election and Appointment Guide* as a guidance document for districts that contains best practices and recommendations for complying with the WAC, rather than an additional layer of policy required of districts. Staff are asking the Commission to formally approve this direction.

Requested Action:

Motion to approve that the *Election and Appointment Guide* is no longer considered a policy document that requires Commission approval and can be managed within agency operations.

Background and Discussion:

The *Election and Appointment Guide* is intended to provide guidance to conservation districts on best practices and recommendations for complying with WAC 135-110. Historically, this document has been treated as a policy document, requiring Commission approval and adherence to the requirements of the Policy on Policies. Staff have reviewed this publication to address changes in the WAC occurring through the current rulemaking process. Through this review process, staff have identified a need for broader update. Staff have also reconsidered whether the *Election and Appointment Guide* should be treated as an additional layer of policy for conservation district elections.

Staff recommend that, moving forward, the *Election and Appointment Guide* be considered a function of agency operations no longer requiring Commission approval for updates. By doing so, it allows SCC more flexibility to update the document as needed to ensure that districts have important and current information for conducting their elections. It also simplifies the policy framework a district must follow by having election laws and rules live solely in the RCW and WAC.

If the Commission chooses to keep the *Election and Appointment Guide* as a policy document, staff ask that Commissioners open a 30-day public comment period for updates that are limited only to the changes to the WAC and some current inconsistencies identified in the Guide. Staff will return at the next Commission meeting in December for formal approval after the public comment period concludes.

Next Steps:

After action by the Commission, staff will continue to work through updates to the *Election and Appointment Guide*. If the Commission chooses to consider this publication a function of agency operations, staff will move forward with broader updates needed for the Guide. This will be completed by the annual district election training occurring on September 29.

If the Commission chooses to keep this publication as a function of Commission policy, staff will open a 30-day public comment period that addresses only updates to reflect the changes to the WAC and current inconsistencies identified in the Guide. The training on September 29 will use a draft update to the Guide.

Staff Contact:
<i>Dani Madrone, Director of Policy and Governmental Affairs</i> dmadrone@scc.wa.gov 564-250-2677



Washington State Conservation Commission

September 17, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Brian Cochrane, Habitat and Monitoring Coordinator

SUBJECT: Modification of CREP Dis-enrolled Contract Assistance Guidelines to
Extend Completion Date

Action Item

X

Informational Item

Summary:

Extend CREP Dis-enrolled Assistance guidelines completion-by date from June 30, 2026, to June 30, 2027, to allow districts to complete field assessments and submission for CREP Dis-enrolled Assistance funds. Federal shutdown, local workload priorities and non-responsive landowners have created a need to extend the allowed time.

Requested Action:

Approve date change in CREP Dis-enrolled Assistance Guidelines for draft 30-day comment period.

Background and Discussion:

CREP in Washington is intended to alleviate some of agriculture-related impacts on water quality and salmon habitat. USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is the program lead. The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) provides a portion of cost share, maintenance, and technical assistance, leveraged with signing incentives, cost share, and annual rental payments provided by FSA, as authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985.

An audit by FSA between May 2023 and October 2025 resulted in many participants having their contracts cancelled by FSA due to ineligibility, their annual rental payment acres reduced, or participants were offered a choice to voluntarily opt out of the program entirely. SCC obtained proviso language in the 2024 Legislative session that allows SCC to compensate contract holders an additional year of lost rent, even though FSA may no longer hold a contract. The proviso funding is provided solely to provide assistance to Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) participants that had acres reduced or voluntarily cancelled due to FSA audit conducted May 2023 – October 2025.

An initial deadline was inserted in the guidelines of June 30, 2026, to provide a timely response to landowners that would not have received the amounts from FSA the previous October (at the end of the federal fiscal year). Due to the federal government shut-down, districts were not able to proceed until December of 2025. In spite of written and oral guidance, some districts were not able to complete the work by the June 30, 2026, guideline date.

As of this memo, Skagit Conservation District would like additional time to contact two participants with a combined award of \$1,528.10. Walla Walla County Conservation District had competing priorities and still has up to \$220,955.18 to award to 92 participants. There may be other districts with extenuating circumstances.

In recognition of completed work, the CREP Dis-enrolled Assistance payments have successfully helped 539 participants with missed payments totaling \$1,265,837. Many participants were very appreciative.

Recommended Action and Options:

Recommended Action: Approve for 30-day comment a new completion date of June 30, 2027, in the CREP Dis-enrolled Assistance guidelines.

Staff Contact:

Brian Cochrane, Habitat and Monitoring Coordinator
(360) 701-5749
bcochrane@scc.wa.gov

TAB 2



Washington State Conservation Commission

September 17, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, SCC Executive Director

FROM: Tara Long, Strategic Initiatives Manager

SUBJECT: Program Guidelines Updates

Action Item

☐

Informational Item

☒

Summary:

A major effort is underway to update and streamline program guidelines across SCC. An update on timelines, engagement, and overall approach is being brought forward for informational purposes and Commissioner awareness and feedback.

Requested Action:

None

Staff Contact:

Tara Long, tlong@scc.wa.gov, (564) 669-0049

Background and Discussion:

SCC staff have developed the following tentative schedule for program guidelines updates. The schedule below reflects when the anticipated draft updates will appear before Commissions to approve for a 30-day public comment period.

Programs scheduled for December 2026 and January 2027 have a time-sensitive application period and associated goal to approve final versions no later than March 2027. SCC staff may recommend a special meeting in February 2027 to advance final approval.

Programs scheduled for March 2027 have a less time-sensitive application period and are tentatively scheduled for final approval in May 2027.

Dates are subject to change based on scope of feedback received and associated necessary updates to each program's guidelines.

December 2026
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
Sustainable Farms and Fields
Voluntary Stewardship Program
Riparian Grant Program – Tiered Incentives

January 2027
Irrigation Efficiencies
Forest Health and Community Wildfire Resiliency
Conservation Technical Assistance
Riparian Grant Program (full Guidelines)
Riparian Plant Propagation Program

March 2027
RCPP
Shellfish
Professional Engineering
Natural Resource Investments
Shrubsteppe Restoration

Next Steps:

SCC staff will begin engagement efforts with conservation districts to inform program guidelines updates and develop tools, templates, and processes to help streamline efforts across SCC.



Washington State Conservation Commission

September 17, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members

FROM: Cherie Kearney, SCC Chair

SUBJECT: Chair and Vice-chair nominating committee

Action Item

☐

Information Item

☒

Summary:

In 2021, the Commission Board adopted policy number 21-07 titled [Governance: Commission Expectations Policy](#). The purpose of establishing the policy was to provide agency governance policy and commitments, provide additional clarity and establish standards of behavior and expectations for service by the Washington State Conservation Commission (WSCC) Board of Commissioners.

On page 4 of policy 21-07, the procedure for the election of chairperson and vicechair person is outlined. The full policy is followed by this memo and the specific section of the election of chair and vicechair has been provided below for quick reference.

The formation of the three (3) member nominating committee occurs annually during September at a regular business meeting by the Board.

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. 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 three (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.

Staff Contact:

James Thompson, Executive Director / jthompson@scc.wa.gov

Lori Gonzalez, Executive Assistant / lgonzalez@scc.wa.gov

September 1, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, Executive Director

FROM: Allisa Carlson, Central Regional Manager

SUBJECT: District Operations and Regional Managers Report

Action Item

☐

Informational Item

☒

Report Summary:

Regional Managers (RMs) offer this report summarizing recent activities and support delivered to conservation districts including district operations, Commission operations, and program administration.

District Operations

RMs continue to support all 45 conservation districts (CDs). We are pleased to once again have five regional managers serving districts across the state.

Our newest team member, **Lora Liegel**, joined the Commission on July 16 as the Puget Sound Regional Manager. She supports the districts shown in green on the regional manager map: <https://www.scc.wa.gov/cd/regional-managers>. Lora brings more than 15 years of experience in conservation, agriculture, and public-sector program leadership, with a background in program development, stakeholder engagement, partnership building, and coordination across diverse communities. Prior to joining the Commission, she served as Program Administrator with the Washington State Department of Agriculture and Executive Director of the Bellingham Farmers Market. Her work has emphasized collaborative partnerships and strengthening programs supporting resilient communities, working lands, and natural resource stewardship.

Commission Operations & Program Administration

The RM team continues assisting with development of several decision packages, including the Natural Resource Investment, Shellfish, and Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative packages.

RMs are continuing to assist with the Grants Manual Usability Improvements (Ombuds Working Group). Josh Giuntoli, Tami Stubbs, and Allisa Carlson serve on “Tiger Teams” to complete address comments and make recommendations on various topics. Scott Noble and Lora Liegel are being brought up to speed on the process and providing support as needed.

Throughout July, RMs closely coordinated with districts to support onboarding of new fiscal-year grant funding.

RMs are delivering new supervisor orientations, which serve as valuable opportunities for connection and learning. The team also ensures supervisors meet statutory requirements for Open Public Meetings Act and Public Records Act training (CAPP Standard 1 – #11).

With several district long-range plans due by year-end, RMs are providing reminders and support as requested.

Overall, RMs remain engaged in board meetings and district events, providing advice, resources, and problem-solving assistance with human resources, risk management, governance, board roles, financial management, and other day-to-day operational needs.

Partnerships & Partnering Assistance

The RM team continues supporting partnership-building among conservation districts and key partners, including WADE, Puget Sound Conservation District Caucus, Center for Technical Development, WACD, DNR, Ecology, DFW, NACD, Washington Association of Land Trusts, State Auditor’s Office, RCO, Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, Washington Conservation Society, and the Integrated Pest Management Workgroup.

RMs successfully completed facilitation of Local Work Group (LWG) meetings where requested by NRCS or LWG Chairs. These meetings were held throughout spring and summer 2026. Discussions continue regarding Task Orders and agreements, including work enabling CDs to assist NRCS with Farm Bill programs and producer contracts.

Chehalis Basin

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

The CBB continues discussion of the long-term strategy. The long-term strategy will require a broad, diversified funding approach because no single source can support its full scale. Implementation will occur at basin-wide, subbasin, and local levels, with funding built gradually across federal, state, local, and partner contributions, along with emerging financing mechanisms. A coordinated, multi-biennia transition to this diversified model is planned, with each phase overlapping and building on the last. Upcoming 2027–29 biennium planning will include an overview of proposed projects and budget needs, anticipated outcomes, key tasks, assumptions, expected 2025–27 reappropriations, and preliminary cost estimates.

Commission staff facilitated the July bi-monthly meeting of Chehalis Basin CDs and Basin partners.

Conservation District Elections and Appointments

RMs continue supporting the Policy team with the elections rulemaking process.

Work is underway to prepare for the upcoming elections cycle. The RM team is coordinating closely with Dani Madrone and Bill Eller on rulemaking, guidance, and training. Required training for conservation districts will be held virtually on September 29.

Programs

RMs currently lead the following programs:

- Implementation
- Shellfish
- Natural Resource Investments (NRI)
- Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resilience Initiative (WSRRI)
 - o The solicitation for habitat restoration projects has closed and applicants are being notified of application status. Franklin CD has been selected as the WSRRI Hub for south-central Washington, The Nature Conservancy will serve as the north-central hub, and WDFW will host the eastern hub. Each hub is receiving funding for infrastructure improvements, materials, and equipment to support shrubsteppe restoration across eastern Washington.
- NRCS Task Orders
- Professional Engineering



Washington State Conservation Commission

September 17, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members

FROM: James Thompson, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Multi-biennia Contracts Update

Action Item

☐

Informational Item

☒

Summary:

SCC staff are actively working on the implementation of the commission directive regarding the use of multi-biennia contracts. This initiative aims to align contract practices with evolving organizational goals and ensure prudent management of programs and practices.

To facilitate effective adoption of the directive, SCC has developed a structured approach focused on engaging districts in tactical, short-term conversations. These interactions are designed to collaboratively define eligibility criteria for programs and practices, ensuring that decisions are both practical and forward-looking.

The approach emphasizes the importance of aligning all program and practice eligibility definitions with SCC's evolving mission and vision. By doing so, SCC ensures that contract strategies remain relevant and supportive of broader organizational objectives.

Requested Action:

None

Background and Discussion:

Riparian Grant Program is the first program that will be eligible for multiple biennia contracts and is anticipated and on track to launch for the 2027-2029 funding cycle.

After considering various factors including project scope within our capital grant programs, SCC staff have identified CREP, IEGP, RCPP, and FPLA as programs that should next transition into multiple -biennia contracts.

In October, SCC staff will engage work groups in a tactical conversation to help identify criteria for what projects within these programs should be considered eligible. We will center this conversation

around project readiness, project scope, and risk management. Our goal is to have the update of these program guidelines reflect this collaborative effort with criteria that supports conservation district work and outlines specific requirements for eligibility and guardrails for risk-mitigation.

Next Steps:

In the longer-term, SCC will engage conservation districts in a strategic conversation that co-develops a vision for how multiple biennia contracts in our programs can help us meet our forthcoming updated mission and vision – elevating our work into a new and improved phase of bringing efficient, impactful, locally-led voluntary conservation to the communities we serve. This engagement is scheduled for early to mid-2027.

Staff Contact:

James Thompson, (564) 233-9919



Washington State Conservation Commission

September 17, 2026

TO: Conservation Commission Members
James Thompson, Executive Director

FROM: Sarah Groth, Chief Financial Officer

SUBJECT: Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual Update

Action Item

☐

Informational Item

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Summary:

The Ombuds Working Group have been working throughout the year to address over 500 comments received in 2025 on the Grant and Contracts Policy Manual. The Ombuds Working Group has provided a suite of recommendations on various topic areas that are currently going through a second round of “fatal flaws” engagement with conservation districts and the broader community. SCC staff is presenting timelines, current feedback, and a deeper look at recommendations advanced on specific topic areas.

Background and Discussion:

The goal of this collaborative effort is to address all comments received and develop a Grants Manual that is clear, helpful, and strengthens the overall grants and contracts administrative process.

Because of the breadth of comments and recommendations, SCC staff are rolling out three batches of recommendations and providing associated engagement opportunities through a survey and discussion at roundtables in September, October, and November 2026.

As of August 27, 2026, the Ombuds Working Group has addressed all comments and developed recommendations in 14 of the 39 topic areas. This number will be higher by Commission meeting date.

This first batch of recommendations was shared in a progress report that was emailed to district managers, SCC staff, Commissioners, and other key stakeholders, and posted to the website, on August 28, 2026.

Districts now have the opportunity to review these recommendations and provide fatal flaws feedback. The Ombuds Working Group will review their feedback and make adjustments to their completed recommendations if needed.

SCC staff will review recommendations on selected topics and share highlights from engagement-to-date at the September Commission meeting.

Table one: Tiger teams, topic areas, and recommendation status.

Tiger Team	Topic Area	Status as of August 27, 2026
Cost Share & District-Implemented Project (DIP)	BMP splitting vs. lumping	In progress
	Cost share	In progress
	DIP	In progress
	Labor rates	Addressed
Fruit Basket	Benefits	Addressed
	Capital assets	In progress
	Clothing / Apparel / PPE	Addressed
	Construction	In progress
	Mortgage	Addressed
	Overhead / Indirect	Addressed
	Overtime	Addressed
	Training / Tuition / Education	In progress
Policy	Advances	In progress
	Approvals / Exceptions	Addressed
	Authorized signatures	Addressed
	Award start dates	In progress
	Biennium hard stop	In progress
	Timing of expenditure / vouchering	In progress
Process & Help	Additional support	In progress
	CAPP	In progress
	Debarment	Addressed
	Individual grant programs	Addressed
	Taxes	In progress
	Vouchering – process and documents	In progress
Travel	Honoraria, stipends, and speaker fees	In progress
	Meals	In progress
	Peer-to-peer rentals	In progress

	Travel	In progress
Unassigned / Entire Ombuds Working Group	Audience	In progress
	Cultural resources	In progress
	Editing and organization	In progress
	Electronic signatures	Addressed
	Foreign transaction fees	Addressed
	Philosophical approach	In progress
	Presentation of policies and procedures	In progress
	Shared staff and ILAs between conservation districts	In progress
	Vocabulary	Addressed
	SCC – conservation district interactions	In progress
	Other	Addressed

Project timeline



Next Steps

The Ombuds Working Group recommendations are advanced to designated Implementation Leads. These Implementation Leads are identified alongside recommendations in Appendix C. Tiger Teams will continue to develop recommendations through November 2026. Progress reports will be published monthly, shared via email and online, with fatal flaw feedback opportunities available through an online form and discussions.

After that, staff will incorporate recommendations to the fullest extent possible into a revised Grants Manual draft for Commissioners to review, potentially modify, and approve for public comment. This progress report will also be updated to a final version at that time.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts



September 2026 Partner Report

ADVOCACY

WACD will host a Legislative Engagement Meeting on Friday, September 18th. This meeting is a follow-up to our April meeting and will provide conservation districts with important updates ahead of Area Meetings and the WACD Annual Meeting in December. The agenda is below. For more information, contact oly@wacd.org.

- 9:30 am - 9:40 am – Greetings & Agenda Overview
- 9:40 am - 10:20 am – Sustainable Funding Committee Update
- 10:20 am – 11:00 am – Ways & Means Committee Update
- 11:00 am - 11:15 am – Break
- 11:15 am - Noon – Amicus Brief Update
- Noon – 12:30 pm – Lunch
- 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm – CD Elections Bill Update & Strategy
- 1:30 pm - 2:15 pm – Other Legislative News and Notes
- 2:15 pm – 2:30 pm – Wrap-up & Adjourn

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

- September 16 – 17: SCC Meeting, Hosted by Underwood CD
- September 18: WACD Legislative Engagement Meeting, Skamania Lodge
- September 21: WACD Board Meeting
- October 14: Northwest Area Meeting
- October 15: Southwest Area Meeting
- October 20: North Central Area Meeting
- October 28: Southeast Area Meeting
- October 29: South Central Area Meeting

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

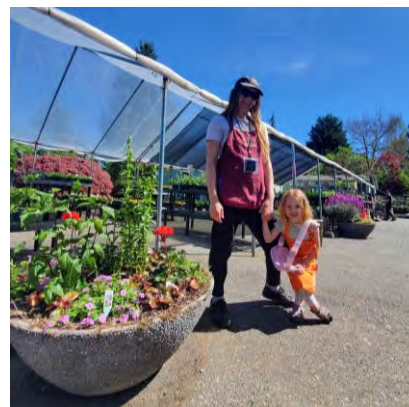
- The WACD Board of Directors will hold its next Board Meeting on September 21st. Information on the meeting can be found [here](#).
- Area Meetings are right around the corner. You can find meeting dates, agendas, and registration information here: <https://wadistricts.us/annual/2026meetings/2026-area-association-meetings/#dates>
- It's time to recognize the people who go above and beyond to support voluntary conservation work across Washington State. WACD is now accepting nominations for our annual awards, honoring the individuals who are making a difference in their communities. Nominations are due Friday, October 30th. You can find the full list of nominations and the award guidelines on the [WACD HUB](#).
- This year's conference theme is: Together, We Can Move Mountains. *Uniting districts and partners to create lasting impact.* Join us at Skamania Lodge, December 3rd – 5th, to celebrate the amazing work of conservation districts and our partners. Register and learn more [here](#).



Photo Credit: Skamania Lodge

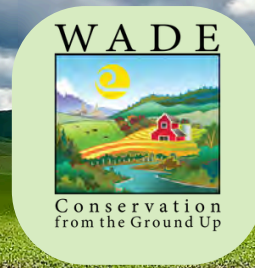
PLANT MATERIALS CENTER

- Summer at the PMC is full of nexts: next harvest, next crop, and next generation. Staff culture plants both in the field and in the office for the next harvest through drought stressing and adjusting inventory. Berries and rose hips are processed and stored as seeds to sow the next crop. The seed orchard was expanded with Vine Maple and Serviceberry to secure seeds for the next generation.
- Thank you, Jacquie! Please join us in thanking [Jacquie Gauthier](#), PMC Sales Manager, for her outstanding service to the WACD PMC and conservation districts. Jacquie will be moving on at the end of October, and we wish her all the very best!
- The Lynn Brown Memorial Scholarship was created by WACD and the Washington Conservation Society (WCS) in 2026. Lynn Brown was instrumental in the creation of the PMC. We are thrilled to announce that the inaugural recipient of this scholarship is Kaylee Logan. Kaylee is enrolled in the Environmental Horticulture program at Lake Washington Institute of Technology. Congratulations Kaylee!



Kaylee and her daughter volunteering at the Lake Washington Institute of Technology plant sale.

WADE 2026 HIGHLIGHTS



Thank you to all who attended and supported the Washington Association of District Employees (WADE) Conference! Conservation Districts from across Washington gathered together in Leavenworth for three days of learning, connection, and collaboration. We celebrated our accomplishments over the past year and the amazing people that make our work possible.



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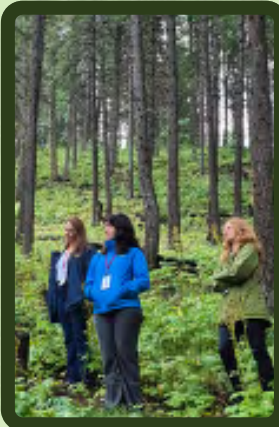
Number of Attendees

Money Raised for WA State Envirothon:

\$1,805

Envirothon is an annual environmental problem-solving competition for high school students. These funds help send students to the North American competition. Find out more at: <https://waenvirothon.org/>

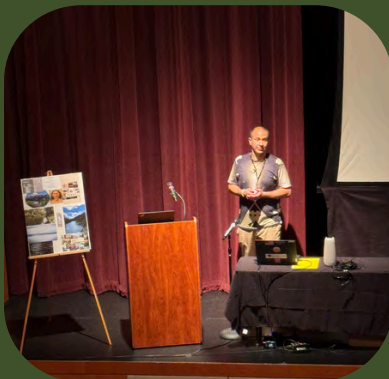
"I learned more from this conference than I ever thought possible."



Forestry Tour

"To me, WADE is about connecting with your counterparts, and my goal at every WADE is to meet more folks and expand my network."

"I took away good information that I can put to use in my job. And the keynote on Weaving Together was really good and very inspiring."



Keynote: Weaving Together Willie Frank III, Nisqually Tribal Council

This presentation traced the history of Northwest Tribes from the Stevens Treaties through profound land loss, forced policies, and enduring resilience. It highlighted key moments such as the Fishing Wars and the 1974 Boldt Decision, which reaffirmed Tribal sovereignty and established co-management between Treaty Tribes and the State of Washington. The story concluded by emphasizing government-to-government relationships, education, environmental stewardship, and the ongoing importance of family, community, and kinship.

WADE PRESIDENT'S AWARDS

MVP AWARD: WADE TROUTMAN



"Wade has created a legacy of impact by sharing the wisdom of generations of land stewardship, while always holding space for new perspectives and ideas. He constantly champions our whole conservation family moving together as one to build a brighter future. He has inspired countless others."

Commission Meeting

SUPERHERO AWARD: MIKE BADEN

"Mike has heart and kindness and passion for our work, and has mentored many of the leaders you see here today. Someone who is always there to help everyone else. Someone whose support and knowledge and Grace have helped us navigate some of the most difficult experiences and situations of our careers. We all have a tremendous amount of gratitude to you."



86 of 106

September 17, 2026

Congrats to the 2026 WADE Employees of the Year!

Marissa Newby, Mason CD

"Throughout her career, Marissa has demonstrated an unwavering dedication to habitat restoration, watershed health, and community engagement...Starting as an entry-level field crew member shortly after high school graduation, she has steadily developed into a highly capable program manager and organizational leader."

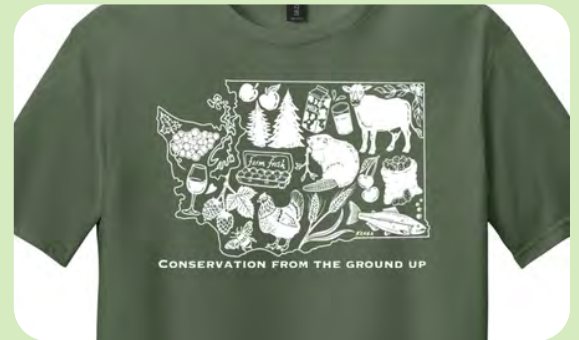
Meghan Adamire, Clallam CD

"Jumping on every challenge, out of the box solutions for incredibly complex issues, and doing so with a smile on her face is just daily business for Meghan. Meghan has done a phenomenal job over the years of keeping CCD known and trusted in our community."

Employee of the Year Nominees



2026 Nominees: Mark Crowley (Kittitas CD), Rosalie Powell (Okanogan CD), Jackson Blalock (Pacific CD), Chase Johnson (Grays Harbor CD), Krystal Sadler (Foster Creek CD), Haly Rylko (Snohomish CD), Ann Gross (Underwood CD). Congrats!



WADE TEE SHIRT DESIGN

Artist: Kenna Fosnacht, Thurston CD

New this year! The WADE 2026 tee shirts capture the rich diversity of working lands in WA State. All proceeds go to the scholarship fund for conference attendees.

Your current WADE Board members are:

Sarah Moorehead (Thurston CD) - Co-President
Alison Crowley (Walla Walla CD) - Co-President **newly elected*
Mike Baden (Spokane CD) - Vice-President
Jan Thomas (Underwood CD) - Treasurer
Zoe Nelson (King CD) - Secretary **newly elected*
Dana Coggon (Pierce CD) - Director 1 (Finance Committee)
VACANT - Director 2 (Conference Committee)
Kenna Fosnacht (Thurston CD) - Director 3 (Partnerships Committee)
Craig Nelson (Okanogan CD) - Immediate Past-President



We need 2027 track coordinators! If nobody signs up to coordinate a track, we can't offer it. Boost your leadership skills, network with colleagues, and enhance your knowledge!

If you are interested in being involved, please reach out to Alison Crowley, alison.crowley@wwccd.net. Please get permission from your supervisor.

Conference Tracks: Forestry, Riparian Restoration, Farms & Fields, Finance/Admin, Design/Implementation Leadership, ECO, IT/GIS



NRCS-WA Activity Report

September 2026





Message from the State Conservationist

Supporting Recovery, Strengthening Service

By Keith Griswold
Acting State Conservationist

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. - It has been devastating to witness wildfires ravaging producers and communities across our state. Homes, farms, and local infrastructure have endured significant losses, and many families are facing difficult recovery ahead. As these fires continue to unfold, we are closely monitoring conditions both statewide and at the national level to stay aligned with updates, assessments and emerging needs. We are working side by side with our partners across USDA to coordinate resources, support early recovery efforts and ensure relief can reach communities as soon as access becomes available. Our team, many of whom live in or near the areas affected, remains focused on providing timely, practical assistance so producers and local leaders have steady support during these challenging days.

As we carry out this work, we are moving forward with the new organizational structure that was announced earlier this year. This realignment is designed to improve efficiency, strengthen operations, and streamline how we deliver conservation services. I want to emphasize that this transition will not result in any loss of positions for staff in NRCS-WA. No employees will be required to relocate, and no field offices in Washington are closing. Our mission, and our ability to serve producers, remains solid and uninterrupted.

The reorganization provides opportunities for clearer communication channels, more consistent workload management, and improved support for our field staff. These changes help ensure our employees have what they need to continue providing high-quality technical assistance. The

strength of NRCS-WA has always come from our people, and this new structure is designed to support them and make our services easier to access for producers and partners across the state.

Alongside these efforts, we are experiencing one of our busiest periods of the year as we work to obligate contracts. Staff across the state are focused on delivering conservation programs efficiently and responsibly, ensuring producers receive the support they need to improve their operations and meet their goals. Our obligation workload is high, and I am grateful for the dedication our employees bring to meeting these commitments.

Looking ahead to next fiscal year, completing all obligations by the end of July will be the top priority for NRCS-WA next year. This timeline will allow us to provide a more predictable and streamlined experience for producers. When producers know early in the year that their contracts are funded, they can move forward with planning and implementation well before the next busy season starts. We value the producers who put their trust in NRCS-WA, and we want to make sure our processes support them in the most effective way possible.

As we continue supporting wildfire recovery, implementing our improved organizational structure, and finishing this year's obligation workload, I remain confident in my team's ability to support all of you. Please know that NRCS-WA is here for Washington's producers, partners, and communities. We will continue working together to deliver conservation solutions that keep working lands in working hands.

Conservation Programs Trending Up

By Aubrey Hoxie

East Area Conservationist

This year brought its share of challenges, but the East Area team met every one of them head on. Staff consistently went above and beyond—supporting other teams to meet deadlines, helping with outreach events, creating new outreach opportunities, and managing increased workloads. Teams across the East Area also requested additional funding from the National Office to better support local producers, and together we delivered more Farm Bill obligations on the ground than ever before.

I'm incredibly proud to lead this team and to see the initiative, resilience, and commitment that directly benefit the producers who supply our nation's agricultural products—whether wheat, beef, timber, or anything else that keeps our rural communities strong.

Programs Update

We are now 85% complete with obligations in the East Area. As noted earlier, we are on track to finish the year with record totals:

Program	# of Contracts	\$\$\$ on the ground	Acres treated
EQIP	107	\$21,970,579	85,000
CSP	94	\$23,046,836	200,152
RCP-2128 Project	1	\$250,000	1,000

Looking Ahead

We continue to support communities affected by Eastern Washington wildfires. Staff—and partner staff—have been sharing information about NRCS programs available post wildfire, and we look forward to collaborating with partners to assist landowners impacted by these damaging events.

As we work through Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) plans, I want to extend a sincere thank you to our partners, the Conservation Districts, and their dedicated staff. Your support with technical site visits, plan development, and associated documentation ensures producers receive the best service possible.

As we wrap up the fiscal year, I'm excited for the upcoming Conservation District Area meetings and the opportunity to see the great work our partners are accomplishing. I value every chance to connect with each of you and strengthen the partnerships that drive our shared mission.



New Staff Join NRCS as Harvest Season Peaks

By Chris Clemens

Central Area Conservationist

Harvest season has been underway for several months, varying by crop. Many are managing multiple harvests simultaneously, making this our busiest time of year. Staff continue to work late hours to meet deadlines and support both their families and the communities we serve. In addition to harvest activities, teams are finalizing contracts for EQIP and CSP programs and collaborating with partners and FSA staff to complete CRP workload for landowners.

Program Updates

For EQIP, we received over 379 applications in FY26 and have successfully obligated 83 contracts to date, totaling \$29 million. The CSP program saw 149 applications this fiscal year, with 31 contracts obligated so far for \$4.5 million. Several applications have been preapproved for funding and are expected to be obligated before August 31st.

Staffing Announcements

We invite everyone to stop by the field office and extend a warm welcome to our new partner positions and colleagues:

Robin Buckingham, Agriculture Program Manager, Cascadia Conservation District, Wenatchee Field Office

Kylie McGuire, Natural Resource Specialist (LUSA), Waterville Field Office

Cayden Hershey, Natural Resource Specialist, Foster Creek Conservation District

Sam Halvorsen, Forester, Washington DNR Omak

Additionally, two new Resource Conservationists have joined us on 120-day details to support efforts in Waterville and Ellensburg:

Parker Olson, Resource Conservationist, Waterville Field Office (formerly with Montana NRCS)

Carolina Proudfoot, Resource Conservationist, Ellensburg Field Office (formerly with South Dakota NRCS)

We appreciate the dedication of our staff and partners during this demanding season and look forward to continued collaboration and success. If you have questions or would like to connect with our new team members, please reach out or visit your local field office.



Cayden



Kylie



Carolina



Parker



West Area

Staff Collaboration, Contract Obligations Drive Strong Finish to Fiscal Year

By Lynn Khuat

Acting West Area Conservationist

As acting West Area Conservationist until early December, I'm honored and grateful to step into this role and learn from our incredible staff, partners, and producers in a new way. In my regular position, I serve as the District Conservationist for the Puget Sound team, just one of the many outstanding teams within the West Area.

Even in this short time, I've been humbled and impressed by the dedication and collaboration across the West Area. In late July, our entire area met at Island Lake Park in Poulsbo, WA, to strengthen connections, identify opportunities for improvement, and build both technical and leadership skills together. We left that meeting with a renewed sense of purpose and a shared commitment to improving the work we do to serve our environment and producers.

Our region reflects some of the most diverse agriculture in the state i.e. cranberry bogs, Christmas tree farms, small scale mixed vegetable operations, shellfish and fish projects, and so much more.

Staff Actions

The West Area currently has four Resource Conservationist Commission Meeting

details located in Longview, Olympia, Port Angeles, and Lake Stevens. Please join me in welcoming Marika Kearsley, who is now serving as the acting Southwest Team District Conservationist until late October. Marika normally works out of the east side of the state, and we appreciate their willingness to support the team during this period.

Program Updates

Teams are working to obligate the remaining 62 EQIP and CSP pre approved or approved applications by the end of August. So far, the West Area has obligated 120 contracts this fiscal year. In total, there are 516 active contracts across the area, covering approximately 38,507 acres with a total obligated amount of \$26,828,794.44. Working with our tribes in our area has also allowed us to get additional EQIP money through Alternative Funding Agreements to fund 3 tribal projects on the West Side totally \$6.2 million dollars for the Cowlitz, Makah and Squaxin Island Tribes.

The momentum in the West Area comes from the power of our partnerships, the trust of our producers, and the incredible dedication of our staff. The collaboration, expertise, and drive fuel the conservation successes we're seeing every day. I'm excited to keep pushing forward together as we finish out the fiscal year strong.

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Changes for Fiscal Year 2027

By Keith Griswold

ASTC for Programs

NRCS-WA is advancing a farmer-first approach to conservation by streamlining access to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Through the agency's Act Now authority, producers can receive faster approvals, clearer program priorities, and earlier opportunities to implement locally driven conservation practices. These improvements reflect NRCS's emphasis on accelerating assistance and strengthening measurable conservation outcomes.

Act Now authorities reduces administrative delays, allowing eligible EQIP and CSP applications to be evaluated quickly. Applications submitted by the Dec. 18, 2026

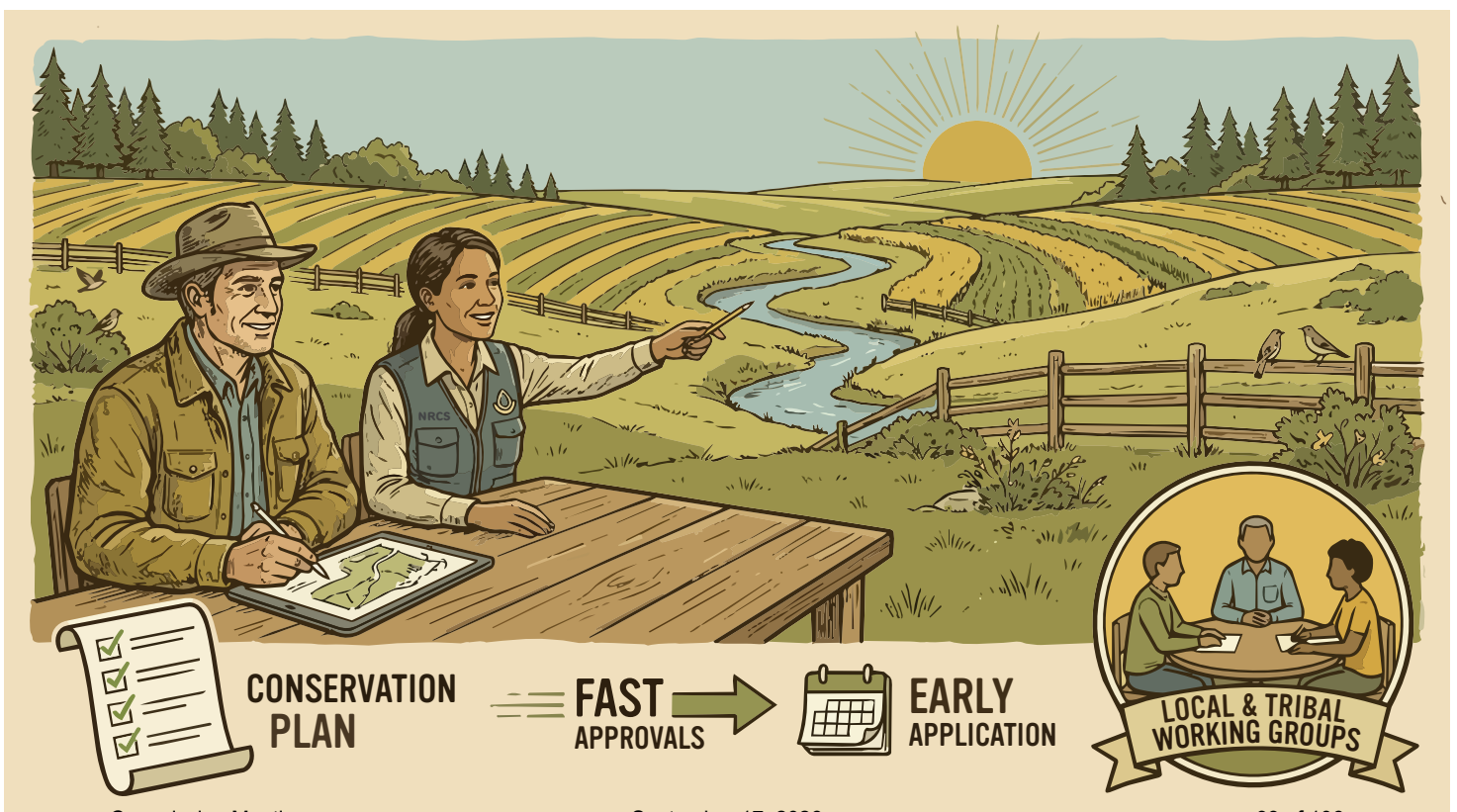
batching date are reviewed in order of receipt and assessed against state-established thresholds. Those meeting or exceeding the threshold are pre-approved while funding is available. Remaining applications may be ranked in other categories or moved to the next funding cycle. After pre-approval, producers must finalize Farm Service Agency eligibility, including FSA tract numbers, adjusted gross income certification, and compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation rules. Producers may not begin work until NRCS issues final contract instructions.

Local Working Groups (LWG) and Tribal Working Groups (TWG) play a key role in identifying priority resource concerns. NRCS is placing greater emphasis on these groups to align conservation efforts with local needs. Producers who address LWG- or

TWG-identified concerns can benefit from NRCS technical and financial assistance designed to improve soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat while supporting agricultural productivity.

EQIP and CSP applications are accepted year-round, and producers are encouraged to apply as early as possible. Establishing FSA eligibility is essential and can take two to three weeks, so timely submission of documents—including AGI certification, AD1026, 902, and farm records—is critical. NRCS will begin selecting applications for funding during the first batching cycle on Jan. 19, 2027.

Don't wait till the deadline date, tell your producers to apply now and establish their FSA eligibility!



Emergency Watershed Protection for Fires Across Washington

By Lynelle M. Knehans
State Conservation Engineer

The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program provides technical and financial assistance to help local communities address imminent threats to life and property caused by natural disasters that impair a watershed. With the numerous fires across Washington this season and the resulting devastation in many local communities, we want to highlight this program for our partners. EWP is a recovery initiative that offers services after a natural disaster to restore affected areas and reduce ongoing risks. For fire events, NRCS becomes involved once the fire is contained and it is safe for staff to assess the site. We coordinate closely with multiple agencies to determine the optimal time to begin post-fire support.

Some of the most significant post-fire threats to communities are flooding and debris flow, which can occur with rain or snow following a high-intensity fire. These events may impact homes, businesses, and other infrastructure. The EWP program can be used to protect infrastructure by repairing damaged or destroyed drainage facilities, removing debris from stream channels, and installing conservation practices to mitigate future risks to life and property.

Unlike many other NRCS programs, EWP requires a local sponsor rather than a landowner or producer. Local sponsors may include cities, counties, towns, conservation districts, or any federally recognized Native American tribe or tribal organization. While this is not an exhaustive list, not all entities are eligible to be sponsors. Sponsors are responsible for obtaining land rights for repairs, securing permits, overseeing installation (which can be accomplished through contracts or agreements), providing the required cost share, and conducting operation and maintenance

Commission Meeting

on completed projects. A key aspect of EWP is the required cost share: it is not a grant program and requires sponsors to contribute 25 percent of construction costs.

EWP has been used extensively throughout Washington for recovery after flooding and fire events for decades. More information about the EWP Program is available at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/ewp-emergency-watershed-protection>.

For potential EWP projects within Washington, partners should contact their local District Conservationist to begin the conversation.

EWP is just one program offered by NRCS. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) can also be utilized for post-fire recovery. Additionally, there are numerous other federal, state, and local resources available for fire recovery. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR) has developed the After the Fire Washington webpage, which provides critical information and resources for wildfire survivors in Washington State. This site is an excellent starting point for anyone seeking guidance on beginning the recovery process: <https://afterthefirewa.org/>.



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Ecological Sciences

NRCS & FSA Complete CRP Training Series, Advance Grazing Policy Changes

By Aubrey Hoxie

Acting State Resource Conservationist

As summer comes to a close, so do our joint NRCS–FSA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) training calls. This year, NRCS and FSA staff delivered six sessions covering policy and technical guidance from both agencies. These trainings have strengthened our partnership and provided a shared platform to review agency responsibilities, the NRCS–FSA MOA, conservation planning and plan development, implementation requirements, haying and grazing policies, SAFE/Continuous CRP

provisions, compliance and spot checks, status reviews, and procedures for certifying stands and cost share.

This momentum has clarified questions for staff and improved our collective ability to support producers. We plan to continue these webinars next fiscal year, introduce new topics, and highlight additional components within the broader CRP program.

Alongside the state FSA Farm Programs Director, we are addressing challenges with establishing

seedlings during the first two years—an ongoing issue in lower precipitation areas. The NRCS WA CRP committee is also working with the Plant Materials Center in Pullman to review seeding rates and methods, ensuring we apply the best available scientific information to our implementation standards.

A significant change is underway regarding haying and grazing: the removal of county specific grazing periods for CRP acres in Washington. FSA will reflect this change in its next amendment.

Management & Strategy

Service Center Update

By Sam Riser

Acting ASTC for Management & Strategy

- ♦ The **Puyallup Service Center** has moved to Tacoma. A new office space located at Tacoma Service Center, 1305 Tacoma Ave. S., Suite 202, Tacoma, WA. The staffed service center will continue to provide support for Pierce County. Initial occupancy date is September 1st and will be fully operational around mid-September.
- ♦ The **Longview Service Center** serving Cowlitz and Wahkaikum Counties has a temporary NRCS employee available for by meetings by appointment only. Please contact Lisa Schuchman at 360-768-3045 to arrange an appointment.
- ♦ The **Spokane Valley Service Center** is expected to shift locations from 8815 E. Mission Ave, Spokane Valley to the State Office location at 11707 E. Sprague Ave, Spokane Valley by December 2026.



Washington's STAC

By Nick Vira

Partnership Liaison

The State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) is an advisory group composed of Washington agricultural producers and conservation leaders, with a purpose of assisting USDA by making recommendations relating to the implementation and technical aspects of natural resource conservation activities and programs.

STAC Membership

STACs are composed of agricultural producers, owners and operators of nonindustrial private forest land, and other professionals who represent a variety of interests and disciplines in the soil, water, wetlands, plant, and wildlife sciences.

Each State Technical Committee should include representatives from the following:

- ♦ NRCS
- ♦ Conservation Districts
- ♦ Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- ♦ FSA State Committee
- ♦ U.S. Forest Service
- ♦ National Institute of Food and Agriculture (formerly the Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service)
- ♦ Tribes
- ♦ State departments and agencies within the State, including the following:
 - Department of Agriculture
 - Department of Fish and Wildlife
 - Department of Natural Resources
 - Conservation Commission
 - Department of Ecology
- ♦ Agricultural producers representing the variety of crops and livestock or poultry raised within the State
- ♦ Owners of nonindustrial private forest land
- ♦ Nonprofit organizations (as defined under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) that demonstrate conservation expertise and experience working with agricultural producers in the State
- ♦ Agribusiness
- ♦ Other agencies, organizations, or individuals knowledgeable about economic and environmental impacts of conservation techniques and programs as determined by the State Conservationist.

Responsibilities of the STAC

- ♦ Provide information, analysis, and recommendations to USDA on conservation priorities and criteria for natural resources conservation activities and programs, including application and funding criteria, recommended practices, and program payment percentages.
- ♦ Identify emerging natural resource concerns and program needs.
- ♦ Recommend conservation practice standards and specifications.
- ♦ Recommend state and national program policy based on resource data.
- ♦ Review activities of the local working groups to ensure state priorities are being addressed locally.
- ♦ Make recommendations to the State Conservationist on requests and recommendations from local working groups.
- ♦ Assist NRCS with public outreach and information efforts and identify educational and producer's training needs.
- ♦ The STAC also holds various sub-committees who work behind the scenes and report to the STAC periodically, including local work groups, the cornerstone to locally led conservation delivery.

STAC Meetings

On usual years the STAC convenes quarterly with two meetings being held face to face, rotating around the state; and the other two meetings are held remotely on an alternating basis. Meetings are posted early in the calendar year to maximize participation. Meeting agendas are sent out to the STAC membership two weeks prior to the meeting along with meeting materials, so partners can review in advance. The next meetings will be held on:

- ♦ November 19, 2026 (virtual)
- ♦ February 25, 2027 (Olympia w/virtual call in options)
- ♦ May 13, 2027 (virtual)
- ♦ August 12, 2027 (Spokane Valley, w/virtual call in options)

If you or your organization would like to become members of the STAC, please send an email to Nick.Vira@usda.gov citing your interests and qualifications.

To learn more about the STAC, scan the QR code or contact Nick Vira.



NRCS Boosts Tribal Conservation Efforts with Major 2026 Investments

By Laura Starr
Tribal Liaison

In 2026, NRCS and Washington Tribal partnerships were strengthened with over \$26 million in financial assistance awarded to eleven WA Tribes for projects like aquatic habitat restoration, sustainable forestry, and invasive species removal. These investments will improve habitats, fish passage, and further sustainable land management. More Alternative Funding Arrangement opportunities are anticipated in 2027 to further support Tribal natural resource management and food sovereignty.

At the National BIA-USDA Workshop in July, WA NRCS highlighted Alternative Funding Arrangements, contributing to valuable discussions on funding and conservation priorities, attended by over 800 participants.

The Tribal Working Group met to identify priority concerns for 2027, selecting fire management, aquatic and terrestrial habitat restoration, erosion control, and plant health as focus areas. This working group ensures that NRCS financial assistance is used to support Tribal-driven priorities.

Washington NRCS is excited to announce that we are promoting a new Interim Conservation Practice, Culturally Significant Planting (825). This practice uses culturally significant plants and Indigenous Knowledge to restore important plant species, support biodiversity, and improve soil health. Technical and financial assistance are available from NRCS to implement this practice. Anyone interested in learning more can reach out to their local field office or the State Tribal Liaison.



Supporting Washington's Producers:

NRCS-WA Resources for the Regenerative Pilot Program

By Nate Gallahan

State Public Affairs Specialist

Producers across Washington are showing growing interest in regenerative agriculture—and NRCS WA is committed to making participation in the Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) as accessible, transparent, and well supported as possible. To do that, we have built a state specific resource hub that brings together the tools producers need to understand program requirements, connect with Qualified Individuals, and successfully meet the soil health and planning standards of the pilot.

Washington Resources

Qualified Individual (QI) Vendor List

NRCS WA maintains a voluntary, non exhaustive QI Vendor List to help producers identify individuals who can support the required whole farm soil health testing (CEMA 216) and other regenerative planning needs. Any Qualified Individual may request to be added, and producers may work with any QI, whether listed or not. This list is updated upon request and maintained by Max Ross, NRCS WA State Soil Scientist.



RPP & TSP Opportunities Webinar

This recorded session helps producers and planners understand how Technical Service Providers (TSPs) and Qualified Individuals can support regenerative agriculture planning. It explains the single application approach for EQIP and CSP and how producers can receive assistance throughout the planning and soil health assessment process.

Fieldvision (The Soil Inventory Project)

In response to feedback from producers and planning staff, NRCS WA now shares Fieldvision—a free, nationally

accessible platform that provides a Qualified Individual database and guides users through the full CEMA 216 workflow, from sampling design to field collection, lab submission, and reporting. USDA has approved linking to this tool as an optional resource to support transparency and ease of access.

Together, these Washington specific tools make it easier for producers to navigate the program requirements, find technical help, and get started on whole farm regenerative planning.

A Growing National Toolkit

While NRCS WA provides targeted, Washington specific resources, USDA's national Regenerative Pilot Program webpage hosts an even larger suite of tools, trainings, and fact sheets that producers should explore. This includes:



- ♦ Comprehensive Fact Sheets
- ♦ National Trainings & Videos
- ♦ Program Overview Materials
- ♦ National FAQs & “How to Apply” Guidance

These national resources complement the Washington specific tools we've created—giving producers a full picture of what's possible through the Regenerative Pilot Program.

Bottom Line

Washington producers now have one central hub, our NRCS-WA RPP webpage, to find local tools, QI resources, soil health guidance, and planning support. These are paired with a robust national library of videos, fact sheets, and trainings that deepen understanding and help producers take full advantage of this farmer first, outcomes based conservation program.



NRCS Expands Farmer-First Conservation Through Faster Approvals and Outcome-Based Support

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. – The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington (NRCS-WA) is advancing a farmer-focused approach to conservation by pairing streamlined program access with strengthened field support and expanded opportunities for voluntary habitat improvement.

Producers can move conservation projects forward more quickly by utilizing NRCS's "Act Now" Authority, which reduces delays and enables earlier on-the-ground results within the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). This initiative aligns with NRCS leadership emphasis on accelerating assistance and maximizing conservation outcomes.

Farmer Empowerment & Outcome-Based Conservation

NRCS is shifting focus away from administrative burden and toward measurable, data-driven conservation outcomes by leaning into the vast knowledge welled within Local Working Groups (LWG) and Tribal Working Groups (TWG). These working groups help NRCS by identifying and solving priority resource concerns in their local areas. Producers who solve those LWG/TWG identified resource concerns on their property benefit from NRCS technical and financial assistance to improve productivity and profitability through soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat practices.

How Act Now Works

Producers do not apply for Act Now through a separate process. Any eligible EQIP or CSP application is automatically evaluated for Act Now consideration. Our nationally established application ...

[Read more via the QR Code >](#)



USDA Offers Disaster Assistance to Agricultural Producers in Washington Impacted by Drought and Wildfire

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. – Agricultural operations in Washington have been significantly impacted by recent drought and wildfires. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover from these adverse weather events.

"We know current drought and wildfire conditions are adversely impacting crops, land, water supplies and livestock, creating financial and emotional strain for the farmers and ranchers we serve," said Farm Production and Conservation Under Secretary Richard Fordyce. "USDA has a suite of programs to support farmers and ranchers as they recover from disasters. I encourage impacted producers to contact their local USDA Service Center to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure, and livestock losses and damages."

USDA Disaster Assistance

Livestock producers who suffered grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land, or fire on federally managed land, may be eligible for the 2026 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP). To participate in LFP, producers must own, cash or share lease, or contract grow eligible livestock; provide pasture or grazing land to eligible livestock on the beginning date of the qualifying drought; and certify that they suffered a grazing loss due to drought. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) maintains a list of counties eligible for LFP and makes updates each Thursday.

Producers who have a risk in the pasture or hay crop must have ...

[Read more via the QR Code >](#)





NRCS “Regular” Hosts Soil Health Assessment Training

CURTIS, Wash. – The Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington (NRCS-WA) and the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) collaborated to bring In-Field Soil Health Assessment Training to Mallonee Farms in Curtis on Aug. 6.

The training was an equivalent training course for the Sustainability and Soil Health Course providing credits for certified planner certifications. Participants from across the state represented Master Gardeners, Washington State University, Conservation Districts, Seattle Public Schools, community colleges, and WSDA.

Maynard Mallonee, owner of Mallonee Family Farm, hosted the event on his property which is an organic dairy operation that has been in in family since 1949. The farm was one of the first organic dairies in Washington State and they have been producing organically certified milk since 2004.

The operation uses no till drill practices in the permanent grazing pastures. Mr. Mallonee mentioned that his grandfather “didn’t believe in plowing” so has implemented grazing practices that reduce tilling and promote healthy soils.

Max Ross, NRCS-WA State Resource Soil Scientist, stationed in Olympia, served as cadre for the training. Max presented the rainfall simulator, wind erosion simulator, and slaking test demonstrations during the training. He used perennial grasses from pastures on the farm, and samples of no-till and conventional till soils to demonstrate the characteristics of healthy soils.

For those wondering if Mallonee is an NRCS-WA client, Max confirmed he is a regular participant. Mallonee utilizes agency programs for grazing, irrigation, and ...

[Read more via the QR Code >](#)



NRCS-WA Begins Watershed Planning for OTID Modernization

The Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington (NRCS-WA) has completed the preliminary investigation findings and is kicking off the Watershed Planning stage of the Oroville-Tonasket Irrigation District (OTID) modernization project plan. The modernization plan aims to reduce operational costs, improve public safety, and ensure essential irrigation water is delivered to the farmers who rely on it. The plan is targeted for federal funding under the Public Law 83-566 program.

Currently, sediment laden water pumped out of the Okanogan River by the Cordell and Crater pumping plants operated by OTID, is causing frequent and costly failures of pumps and motors at these locations. As part of the current plan, the pumping plants will be retrofitted with sediment basins fed by durable low-pressure pumps, this will remove the bulk of sand and silt causing these issues for high pressure pumps and their motors. This methodology has been proven very successful at both the Bonaparte and Tonasket pumping plants, which are also operated by OTID. Reduction of sediment in the system will also benefit local farmers, by lessening wear on their irrigation systems.

The plan also seeks to modernize about 10 miles of pipeline, which has been degraded overtime due to internal erosion caused by sediments. Repairs to the decades old techite pipeline has proven difficult, time consuming, and increasingly expensive. One such failure at Tonasket resulted in damage to private property, washout of a public roadway, and flooding of a nearby cemetery. Beyond life and property concerns, pipeline failures halt irrigation water delivery until they can be found and repaired.

The preliminary study findings included a recommendation to consider upgrading fish screens for one or more of the 30 existing fish screens ...

[Read more via th QR Code >](#)



USDA Clarifies Wetland Determinations to Provide Certainty to Farmers

(Washington, D.C., July 28, 2026) - The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is putting farmers first and supporting government accountability by providing clear guidance around wetland determinations, which helps inform agricultural producers' decisions for their operations. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) published an interim final rule that ensures most determinations made since 1990 are considered certified, and producers can rely on the determinations to work farmland.

"We want to empower farmers, ranchers and landowners to do what they do best – farm the land," said NRCS Chief Colton L. Buckley. "Farmers' direct relationship with the land makes them uniquely qualified to guide its stewardship, and we took action to provide regulatory certainty in order to make operational decisions."

Producers rely on certified wetland determinations when



making decisions about their agricultural operations, which impacts USDA program eligibility such as farm loans, conservation assistance, crop insurance and commodity programs.

Through this interim final rule, NRCS addressed inconsistencies in how wetland determinations have been certified and issued in the past. It aligns USDA policy with statutory requirements, protects producer reliance interests, and reduces unnecessary administrative burden by ...



USDA Invests \$3 Million for Wetland Mitigation Banking Projects to Support Producers and Protect Wetland Ecosystems

(Washington, D.C., July 24, 2026) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing \$3 million to support the development of wetland mitigation banks for agricultural producers. Through the USDA's Wetland Mitigation Banking Program (WMBP), wetlands are restored, created or enhanced, generating credits that can be purchased by producers looking to compensate for unavoidable impacts to wetlands at another location.

"Wetland mitigation banks provide farmers and ranchers a clear and efficient compliance pathway, while at the same time helping to restore and protect ...

Commission Meeting



USDA Announces \$35 Million to Combat Feral Swine on American Agricultural Lands

(Washington, D.C., July 23, 2026) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making available \$35 million for partnerships to respond to the threat feral swine pose to American agriculture, landscapes and human and livestock health. This partnership opportunity is part of a broader \$105 million investment for the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program, where USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) are working together to target feral swine.

"We are collaborating with our partners at USDA and across the country to help combat feral swine and keep our farms, ranches and landscapes safe," said NRCS Chief ...

September 17, 2026



USDA Modernizes Conservation Solutions to Better Conserve Natural Resources, Support Working Lands

(Washington, D.C., June 29, 2026) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is improving and modernizing 32 key conservation practices, part of a broad effort by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to put farmers first by strengthening conservation solutions. To gather feedback to update the practice standards, NRCS held more than 150 roundtables, bringing together more than 2,000 agricultural producers in every state and territory. Additionally, NRCS is currently accepting input now through July 6, 2026, on the Federal Register.

"We want to make sure our conservation practices meet the needs of farmers, supporting ...



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Partner Report from the Washington State Department of Agriculture



September 2026



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture

Derek I. Sandison, Director

September 2026 | Partner Packet for the State Conservation Commission

September 2026

Read this report for updates on WSDA's conservation and agricultural partner work, from the emerging threat of invasive pests like Emerald Ash Borer and Japanese beetle, to continued progress on native bee documentation through the Washington Bee Atlas, to a major funding push to modernize dairy manure storage and curb nitrate contamination in the Columbia Basin and Lower Yakima Valley. Also included: disaster assistance resources for drought- and wildfire-impacted producers, and radiological emergency preparedness materials for farms near the Columbia Generating Station.

PESTS

WSDA's Pest Program surveys for over 130 invasive insects, weeds, and plant pathogens annually. If established, these invasives could threaten Washington's agriculture and ecosystems. In addition to trapping for Japanese beetle statewide, the Pest Program has completed turf and foliar treatments in Grandview, Sunnyside, Mabton, Wapato, Pasco, Kennewick, and the City of SeaTac and surrounding areas where efforts have been underway to eradicate populations of Japanese beetle. Efforts to protect shellfish production and salmon habitat from the invasive cordgrass *Spartina* are ongoing in Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor, and other coastal areas as well as Hood Canal and in the Puget Sound.

Detection surveys are being conducted following the interception of a live yellow-legged hornet (*Vespa velutina*) in Vancouver. WSDA and USDA APHIS officially confirmed the presence of Washington's first Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) after specimens were collected in early August in the Hazel Dell area, north of Vancouver.

Reporting plays an essential role in finding invasive pests. Suspected sightings should be sent to WSDA by emailing pest@agr.wa.gov, or by calling 1-800-443-6684.

POLLINATORS

The Washington Bee Atlas is a participatory science program focused on documenting native bee occurrence across the state. To date, WABA has 195 active volunteers who have collected 32,977 bee specimens with recorded floral associations, including several new and rare species ([News Releases | Washington State Department of Agriculture](#)). WABA partners with WDFW, DNR, NP, USNF, and private landowners to survey a diverse range of bee habitats.

To join, visit our website at [Bee Atlas | Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) or email pollinators@agr.wa.gov to learn more.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Since the late 1980s, nitrate contamination of drinking water has been a concern in the Columbia Basin and Lower Yakima Valley, and monitoring indicates persistent and increasing levels. Aging and damaged manure storage is a pathway for groundwater nitrate contamination. To help address this concern, WSDA and partners have applied to NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program. The

proposed project will assist dairy producers to modernize manure storage and handling, and strengthen nutrient management on land receiving manure nutrients, thereby reducing the risk of nutrient loss and supporting beneficial use of manure as a local fertilizer source. The objective is to replace, reline or reconstruct twelve waste storage structures to NRCS standards; install separation and transfer practices; close one obsolete structure; develop or revise a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) for every operation; and apply nutrient management across 10,163 acres. If funded, WSDA will lead the partnership; Columbia Basin and South Yakima Conservation Districts will deliver boots-on-the-ground technical assistance and planning and construction oversight; Washington State Dairy Federation will oversee producer engagement; and Washington State Department of Commerce will contribute financial match to the digester-linked operations. This proposal requests \$4,793,194 against partner contributions of \$5,179,192, a ratio of 1.08 to one, with producers investing a further \$2,136,732.

Please reach out to the project lead with questions or ideas:

Kyrre Flege | (360) 746-1249 | kyrre.flege@agr.wa.gov.

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES FOR RADIOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES

WSDA has issued two publications, created to provide radiological emergency information for farmers who raise animals, or grow food crops, as well as food processors and distributors, who are located within 50 miles of a nuclear power plant. These publications are the *Agricultural Information During a Radiological Emergency* factsheet and the more comprehensive *Radiological Information for Farmers, Food Processors and Distributors*. The publications are available at <https://agr.wa.gov/services/emergency-management/radiological-emergencies>. Printed copies in English and Spanish have been provided to the six counties within 50 miles of the Columbia Generating Station (Adams, Grant, Franklin, Benton, Yakima, Walla-Walla). Conservation Districts are encouraged to connect with their county emergency management office to obtain copies to distribute.

USDA DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE FOR WILDFIRES

Agricultural operations in Washington have been significantly impacted by recent drought and wildfires. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover from these adverse weather events. USDA has a suite of programs to support farmers and ranchers as they recover from disasters. WSDA Emergency Management is asking Conservation Districts to encourage impacted producers to contact their local USDA Service Center to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure, and livestock losses and damages.

If counties or CDs have questions or need additional materials, please contact WSDA Emergency Management at: Emergencymanagement@agr.wa.gov.