

SCC – CDs Roundtable Meeting Notes

December 11, 2025

Facilitated by Jean Fike | Notes by Tami Stubbs
Next Roundtable Meeting: January 8, 2026 – 9:30 am

Welcome and Introduction

- Jean Fike, Puget Sound Regional Manager, opened the meeting with an opportunity for participants to share their experiences dealing with the ongoing extreme weather events. The state's residents are coping with evacuations, flooding, road closures, property and infrastructure damage, and livestock losses due to the heavy rainfall. High winds are also causing damage and power outages.
- Jean noted that we often skip the December Roundtable (RT) but wanted to meet this month to talk about how the RT calls are going and how we can make better use of the time together. From now on, updates from SCC will be entirely or mostly in writing. No updates were submitted for the December meeting.

WACD Update

- Heather Wendt, WACD Deputy Director, reported that with areas of the state currently experiencing devastating flooding, NRCS has asked WACD to remind districts about the **Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP)**. From the '5 Things' newsletter: *The EWP Program is a recovery effort aimed at relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural disasters. All projects must have a project sponsor. NRCS may bear up to 75% of the eligible construction cost of emergency measures (90% within limited-resource areas as identified by the U.S. Census data). The remaining costs must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services. For more information, please see the EWPP Fact Sheet [here](#) or contact Nick Vira, NRCS Partnership Liaison, nick.vira@usda.gov.*
- The Plant Materials Center will be closed on Thursday, 12/11, and Friday, 12/12, to allow staff to deal with personal situations related to flooding. As of the Roundtable meeting, there had been no flood damage at the PMC.
- Heather thanked all who participated in the WACD Annual Meeting last week, whether in person or remotely. The finalized resolutions and meeting videos will be posted soon.
- Now that the WACD convention is over, attention has turned to Legislative Day on February 10, 2026. Information on how to participate in Legislative Day will be emailed out to districts soon. A block of rooms will be available at the downtown Olympia Hilton, and reservations should be made by January 24. The rooms will be available February 9-11 to accommodate those who arrive early and those who are staying for the Ombuds Workgroup meeting on February 11. Heather is already working on arrangements for the 2027 Legislative Days.

- Ryan Baye reported that legislation is expected to be introduced that would require CD supervisors to submit Form F-1, the Personal Financial Affairs Statement. He is awaiting news on the Governor's budget.
- Ryan also reported that the contract for the 2026 and 2027 annual meetings at Skamania Lodge will be finalized soon. Please reach out to him with any feedback on the 2025 WACD convention.

Roundtable Meeting Improvements

- Jean introduced Jessica Wilson, SCC Chief Engagement Officer. Jessica explained that one of the priorities for her role at SCC is process improvement. She discussed improving the current RT meeting format to ensure there is time for meaningful discussions.
- Mike Nordin requested that the RT meeting time be used for delving deeper into specific topics, that updates are kept brief, complaints are kept to a minimum, and there is a proactive approach toward addressing concerns and problems. He also requested that the meeting notes include all details on "who-said-what" rather than the usual format, which has summarized discussions without providing extensive detail.
- Megan Stewart requested that only new information be included in the meeting, with opportunities for conversation and digging deeper into issues affecting CDs. She suggested that the space be used to work on processes for increased efficiency before the start of the next biennium and suggested that CDs be more proactive in contributing ideas for Roundtable agendas. This would allow the appropriate SCC staff to attend the meetings and address specific topics.
- SCC Commissioner Wade Troutman noted that he makes follow-up phone calls when he feels there are issues he needs to hear more about. Because SCC meetings do not provide opportunities for in-depth discussion on topics that come up, he would like to see SCC staff and District Managers work together to create a space for open, respectful discussion. Perhaps WACD or WADE could assist in creating meeting agendas. He said that it would be helpful to him to have a meeting format where CD questions and concerns will be heard.
- Evan Bauder expressed frustration that the effort to improve the Roundtables is occurring too late, and his opinion is that past RT meetings have been short because there hasn't been a demonstrated effort to act or follow up on topics of discussion. He said that he would like to work with the SCC but feels that his opinions are brushed aside. He also feels that the consultants hired by SCC have been ineffective at times.
- Joy Garitone concurred with previous statements and noted that she had 'checked out' on the meetings some time ago because of the feeling that leadership has been lacking in meeting the needs of CDs. She requested that Executive Director Thompson attend the meetings to discuss SCC's leadership plan. She expressed appreciation for the District Digest; however, she does not want to hear the information repeated in meetings. She concluded by saying she's tired of waiting and hoping for action and change. She is weary of change that is too little, too late—

she will be ready to reengage when there is an effort to “quit planning and get it going!” Joy emphasized the importance of being kind to each other.

- Sarah Moorehead reiterated her message from the meeting chat that “the CD Manager's Group is starting to function like what Wade is suggesting and tackling topics by month, happy to provide a bridge to these roundtables so we can discuss them holistically with partners.” She suggested choosing one topic each month for more in-depth discussion and getting the discussion topics from the districts in a timely manner, while they’re still relevant and timely. It would be helpful for the districts to understand the constraints that SCC is working under (legal, political, etc.) that might not be obvious. If districts understood those parameters, then when solutions are proposed, districts would understand why or why not a solution would be viable and who has the authority to determine changes in law or policy. When districts encounter roadblocks, what is the path to overcome them?
- Jennifer Boie expressed appreciation to the Commission for acknowledging the current tension and having conversations to address issues head-on. She believes revising the RT format is a good-faith effort by SCC to make sure CDs are heard, and she also appreciates hearing the comments of her colleagues. Jennifer noted that both the Commission and the CDs have evolved significantly over time and are completely different organizations than they were at their inception. Jennifer has hope for collaboration, with room for diverse and conflicting ideas to be heard. The collaborative process takes longer if we don’t row together, and she appreciates the work of SCC to listen to CD concerns and hopes for collaboration in a positive way. It’s important to recognize that the process of collaboration takes time, and she appreciates everyone’s work and time. Jessica appreciates a direct form of communication and appreciates all the comments conveyed so far. She looks forward to getting to know everyone on the call and finds these conversations valuable.
- Tova Tillinghast would like SCC to move away from the reactionary, ad hoc method that has been taken to respond to feedback from districts and take a more systematic approach to resolving issues through gathering feedback, improving the flow of information as an integral part of how the SCC communicates with CDs, and integrating CDs into how the commission operates.
- Jessica Wilson appreciated those comments and acknowledged the importance of creating systems that are predictable and transparent and ensure that everyone will be represented.
- Suggestions from the chat on ways to improve the meeting include Savannah Crnickk’s idea to create a Google Doc or other list that people could add agenda items to throughout the month.
- Paul Andersson commented in the meeting chat: “What districts need are process improvements. From gathering info to build an agenda for these meetings (OneNote, Google, other portal), to making all programs streamlined, consistent, predictable, and responsive; to replacing CPDS, Formstack, and several disparate systems with a project portal that works; to updating the Grants Manual. In a specific example, there was a WSCC IT project manager working on an audit of IT systems. Where did this employee go, and what is the status of a CPDS replacement? The report-outs they were giving were abstract to district operations

and not helpful; then they dropped off the chart. These are straightforward process improvements (across the board) that need to shift to a phase of being implemented and not planned for...”

- Zorah Oppenheimer concurred with Jennifer and Paul and noted that in an overhaul, it can look like progress isn’t being made. Part of making sure there is support for change is communicating the small changes that are happening. Major organizational change can be overwhelming, but small improvements could be made that don’t require a major overhaul or a high cost, like choosing either Formstack or Smartsheet for grant applications, for example. Take small wins that don’t require big investments.
- From the meeting chat, LeAnn Thomas commented, “I think it is important to be proactive and not reactive. Communication is such an important piece to a successful team unit.”

Demonstration of new software – Jessica Wilson

- Jessica Wilson introduced the Slido poll tool as a transparent option for designing RT meetings.
- Jessica continued that the Slido tool would be embedded as a webpage on the SCC website on the CD Resources home page. The poll would stay open continuously. People can type in their ideas, and then others can upvote the ideas or suggestions they would prioritize for discussion. The most popular items would be included in the next RT meeting agenda. The agenda topics would be released ahead of the RT meeting so CD staff members can decide if the topic is relevant to them and they want to take the time to attend, and the appropriate SCC staff can also make plans to attend and be available for discussion and questions. Jessica reiterated that it's important to discuss what's really important to districts rather than have others intuiting what's important.
- Jennifer Boie likes the idea of collaborative agenda building, and the idea of having the poll embedded in a webpage so that participants don’t have to search for an email with the poll link; it’s also helpful to have advance notice of meeting topics for time to prepare, and so the appropriate SSC staff can be present to make the meetings productive. She also noted a need to determine how meeting notes will be captured and communicated back out to the CD community.
- Jenny Coe asked if there would be a place for districts to submit specific questions about the topic ahead of time. Jessica responded that such a feature could be built into the poll in order to hit on the most important topics. There are many ways this could be structured.
- Paul Andersson is in favor of trying the new tool—roll it out, try it out, collect feedback, and improve upon it where needed. He suggested that we not spend a lot more time discussing the process improvement—just move on!” The group agreed!

- Jessica responded that the new poll format will be rolled out. She will add it to the SCC website on the CD Resources home page. She welcomes feedback on how people like the tool or if a different tool should be explored.
- Brandy Reed asked a question about how the tool will be accessed. Jessica responded that it will be pinned to the home page of the CD Resources on the SCC website for constant access. She feels it is more useful for people not to access the tool from an emailed message, but from a web page.
- Zorah requested a reminder email for folks to vote or add comments before the poll closes. Jessica said it would also be possible to include links in the District Digest for people to access the poll. Jessica asked the group how much time they would need to submit their responses before the poll is closed, and the votes are tallied. Responses from the chat included five business days, one week, and two weeks in case folks are on leave.
- In the chat, Paul Andersson contributed: “Our planning staff builds weekly meeting agendas on MS OneNote that we populate throughout the week and pull when the meeting starts. Anybody can contribute. Topics can be at any level of detail as needed. We usually end up with 5-9 items to try to get through.”
- In the chat, Zorah Oppenheimer suggested “SCC could have a calendar invite 2 weeks prior to the meeting (or whatever time frame) so it's on our calendars to add to it. Not that we have to do it at that specific time, but that might be less work for SCC staff.”
- Megan Stewart suggested adding the question right away “What is it about the topic that you want to discuss?” to avoid topics that are too broad or vague. Discussions will be most useful if SCC staff have the opportunity to prepare and respond to specific questions.
- Tova Tillinghast asked if RT meetings will be the main vehicle for communication with the SCC or if there will be a multi-faceted approach. She wonders how SCC leadership plans to stay aligned and engaged in the process, and also what the vision is for change beyond the Roundtables, recognizing that we are early in the process. Jessica Wilson replied that she recognized there was a lot of frustration expressed at the November RT meeting. She is committed to working on a vision for reliable and transparent communication channels and finding ways to accomplish common goals. Going forward, there will be multiple discussions to determine methods that will ensure a collaborative process.
- SCC Commissioner Wade Troutman shared with the group that in a previous Commission meeting, he needed to vote on a policy for which properly vetted information had not been provided. He believes the process discussed today is a good start toward improving communication and stated that he wants to make sure CD concerns are heard so that when it is time for SCC commissioners to vote on

new policies, they are well thought out and have been vetted by the districts. In the chat, CD staff voted Wade “Supreme Ruler of the Universe” for his remarks 😊.

- Paul Andersson commented in the chat “We need you to vote “yes” commissioner (Troutman), to keep the money flowing. The policies are better passed imperfect than not passed perfectly.”
- Jessica requested suggestions on the best way to gather feedback from people who are unable to attend the RT meetings. Mike Nordin suggested providing clear instructions to all invitees and providing contacts for people who may have questions.
- From Zorah Oppenheimer in the meeting chat: “I would send out the notes and put in the subject line, something about feedback needed. And write what you want in the body of the email at the top, and put a deadline.”
- Mike Nordin noted that District Managers have become inundated with surveys and requests for information. He would appreciate knowing which surveys are highest priority. Jessica agrees and plans to work toward consolidating requests for information.
- From Tom Salzer in the meeting chat: “For this system to work well, Commission staff have to respect that conservation districts have skills and experience that Commission staff often lack. We need all voices to be heard and understood.”
- From Tova Tillinghast in the meeting chat: Collaboratively building a collaborative process... good goal - looking forward to it, but worried about "a lot of process" and hoping we get simple changes made as we go.
- Jessica Wilson recapped the next steps for Roundtables under the new format. She will ensure the topic suggestion form is up and running on the webpage and includes space for adding specific questions. The link and reminder to participate will be included in the January District Digest, and she will coordinate with the Regional Manager team to send the link out with the meeting invitation. When the meeting notes are distributed, she will make sure that all feedback is captured thoroughly and will include her contact information. In the first round of voting, she aims to collect topics and agendas for the first quarter of 2026.
- Zorah Oppenheimer asked for confirmation that the new RT meeting format is the place to ‘get into the weeds’ on the topics at hand, and the answer is “yes”! The plan is for at least one topic to be covered in depth each month, with the topics determined by the most popular vote from the Slido web tool.
- Jessica Wilson thanked everyone for their time and turned the meeting over to Jean. Jean Fike thanked all who attended and provided their feedback!

Other Topics

- Zorah Oppenheimer asked a question regarding advances under biennial grants. She asked the group if it's necessary to reconcile the advance before the end of the fiscal year for a biennial grant program. Sarah Groth responded that it is not necessary to reconcile the advance before the end of the fiscal year; however, a district would not have the ability to request any new advances until the first one is reconciled. All advance payments must be fully reconciled at the end of the grant period; for this biennium, fiscal year grant advance payments must be reconciled on the June 2026 voucher, and biennial grant advance payments must be reconciled on the June 2027 voucher.

Closing

- Participants were thanked for the respectful, constructive conversation!
- Jessica encouraged all to reach out to her with questions or feedback. If you could not attend the meeting and would like to add additional feedback to what was received about the new tool for selecting Roundtable topics, please feel free to reach out. She can be reached at: jwilson@scc.wa.gov, Cell: 564-250-1865