

# SCC – CDs Roundtable Meeting Notes

January 8, 2026

Facilitated by Jean Fike | Notes by Tami Stubbs  
Next Roundtable Meeting: February 12, 2026 – 9:30 AM

## Welcome & Roundtable Discussion Topics Tool Review

- Jean Fike, Puget Sound Regional Manager, opened the meeting. Now that the holidays are behind us and a new year has begun, it's an appropriate time to make a fresh start with a new Roundtable Meeting format.
- Jessica Wilson, SCC Chief Engagement Officer, reviewed the new [Roundtable Discussion Topics](#) tool and the process for determining deep dive topics for roundtable meetings. Thank you to everyone who submitted their ideas for this month. With the holidays and a short turnaround for folks to submit topics and SCC staff to prepare, we are off to a bit of a slow start! Going forward, the plan is to build out Roundtable agendas at least one quarter ahead of time.
- This month, the most upvoted topic participants wanted to address was ***“Emergency changes to RGP and how decisions made during program rollout are preventing CDs from addressing the most critical resource concerns”***. Jessica explained that there wasn't enough time for SCC staff to adequately prepare for a meaningful discussion on this topic, and so it will be postponed for now. She noted that for important and time-sensitive topics, there is the option to schedule special Roundtable meetings.
- Evan Bauder expressed concern that under the new format, 'deep dive' discussions on topics are the expectation, and he fears that Roundtable topics might still be 'in the kiddie pool'. The topic of RGP concerns has been put forth on other occasions for discussion. He expressed hope that the right group of people can be pulled together to create change in the RGP.
- Jessica is happy to receive the feedback and appreciates patience as she learns her new role, and the 'Roundtable Discussion Topic' tool continues to be improved.
- Zorah Oppenheimer suggested a change to the tool so that participants can specify whether a topic warrants a thorough discussion or simply a quick update. From the chat, Savannah Crnick suggested adding abbreviations to designate quick updates from deep dive topics. Jessica will work on the request and increase the character count for typing in topic suggestions.
- From the chat, Sarah Moorehead requested a mechanism to prioritize discussion topics and commented that there may be a need to pivot quickly on discussion topics that have a sense of urgency. Jessica explained that participants can upvote topics with a "thumbs up" in the Slido tool, and this will determine the highest priority topics to discuss. Jessica mentioned that the original plan was to have at least five business days for SCC staff to prepare for discussing the selected deep dive topic. Jennifer Boie expressed appreciation for the goal of allowing SCC staff time to prepare and agreed with the idea of holding special meetings or work

sessions if there isn't time to adequately prepare for the regularly scheduled Roundtable.

- Jean moved the group on to other topics for quick updates. Joy Garitone submitted a question on Conservation Districts and Emergency Management Plans. Jean was unable to connect with Joy ahead of time, and therefore, the topic will be postponed for now. There was another question about RGP incentives; however, there were no SCC staff on the call to address the topic, and so it will also be postponed.
- Brandy Reed informed the group that an Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program meeting with NRCS is occurring at the same time as the Roundtable, and perhaps that's why some folks couldn't join the Roundtable call. Heather Wendt mentioned that the NRCS EWP Program meeting was inadvertently scheduled at the same time, and NRCS plans to record the meeting.

## Governor's Budget Update

- Sarah Groth, SCC Chief Financial Officer, clarified that there are ***no cuts to the Riparian Grant Program***, despite some confusing information that was published indicating otherwise. A proposed cut of \$676,000 to SCC was published in the Governor's budget. The cut is designated for 'activities pertaining to technical services to conservation districts', which is funding that SCC passes on to conservation districts. Sarah reminded that this is only the first step in the budget process and therefore, no decisions have been made by SCC as to how cuts will be applied. We are waiting for additional information on how legislators approach the new budget. None of the three decision packages put forth by SCC for funding was moved forward. Sarah reported that she received positive feedback from OFM on the Forest Health & Community Wildfire Resiliency decision package; funding just wasn't available.
- SCC Executive Director James Thompson reminded that the Governor's proposed budget is only the first step in a long process; it's important to use this information to help inform future negotiations. James expects a busy couple of months, and SCC will continue to inform CDs of budget developments.
- Kate Delavan linked the following Seattle Times article in the chat: [A budget 'rat hole'? Political fight over WA climate money intensifies](#)
- Jennifer Boie asked a clarifying question of Sarah Groth – Will CDs receive all the RGP funding that is expected? Sarah responded that there have been no cuts to RGP and all expected funding should be received.
- Ryan Williams asked if there will be any reappropriated RGP funds, and Sarah responded that there is the potential for future rounds of RGP applications. She encouraged all CDs with funds to return to please submit the [Returned Funds Form-Capital & Operating](#) as soon as possible, as it helps with planning and ultimately getting more conservation on the ground quickly.
- Jennifer Boie asked what the \$676,000 in cuts to CDs might look like. Sarah responded that the cuts would be to general fund programs such as Implementation, Professional Engineering, Riparian Plant Propagation Program, Sustainable Farms & Fields, and Task Orders. The proposed cuts would come from the technical services bucket for each program, not the CD operations bucket for

each program. James Thompson again cautioned that the Governor's budget is only a first step and there is a long process ahead before a final budget is signed. Sarah noted that legislative staff are beginning to reach out to learn how the proposed cuts would impact CDs.

## Policy Update

- Dani Madrone, SCC Legislative Director, reported that the Legislative Session begins Monday, January 12. It is a short session, 60 days, and she will be sending out a weekly legislative update newsletter: [Sign up for SCC's Legislative News!](#)
- The Legislature will put the Governor's budget in bill form, and there will be hearings where constituents have the chance to weigh in. The next revenue forecast is expected by February 20, and both chambers will submit their budget proposals shortly after. Of the three decision packages put forth by SCC, Forest Health is the most likely to see some funding, as it has gained a lot of attention. Dani is working on an internal tracking list of bills. She mentioned HB2154, sponsored by Rep. Joe Schmick, concerning land ownership of greater than 20 acres by conservation districts. So far, there has not been a bill introduced on conservation district election reform. Please reach out to Dani with questions on the legislative process, and be sure to visit the new webpage for [SCC Legislative Resources](#).
- Kate Delavan, SCC Director of Policy & Intergovernmental Affairs, invited all to a conversation on the 2027-29 biennial budget, the needs of the conservation district community, and this year's process to develop decision packages. A hybrid meeting will be held on Monday, February 9, at the Olympia DoubleTree Hotel from Noon to 4:30 PM. CD staff are invited to attend in person or remotely to help identify budget priorities and build on the successful work that was done to prepare for the supplemental budget. A \$500/CD travel reimbursement is available for those attending in person. RSVP to Paige DeChambeau ([pdechambeau@scc.wa.gov](mailto:pdechambeau@scc.wa.gov)).
- Dani has received a request from a legislator for conservation district assistance in removing derelict crab pots. Please let Dani know if anyone feels they could help. Brandy Reed noted that while CDs might not be able to perform the work, they do have relationships with other entities that could help with the process. Evan Bauder suggested shellfish companies as potential partners, and Linda Lyshall provided the following link to Dani on the Northwest Straits Foundation:  
<https://nwstraitsfoundation.org/derelict-gear/>

## Conservation District Elections

- Mike Baden, SCC NE Regional Manager, reminded districts to please submit their EF-1 forms to the Commission as soon as their election resolutions have been passed.
- Now that election season is upon us, please also remember to submit Form EF-2 with election results no more than 14 days after the election. Election Supervisors are reminded to obtain eligible voter lists from their county or the Secretary of State. Don't wait until the last minute in case you encounter hiccups in the process!
- There is an [Elections Media Toolkit](#) available on the SCC website to assist in advertising CD elections.

## WACD Update

- Tom Salzer, WACD Executive Director, reminded that it's early in the budget process and no one should panic! The process is expected to be more contentious this year; he encourages solidarity among the conservation community and asks that everyone please communicate with WACD regularly.
- Ryan Baye, WACD Director of Legislative & Membership Services, reiterated that the CD elections bill is not on the legislative schedule yet. WACD plans to come up with its own elections bill, similar to the 2020 bill. Ryan asked that districts please reach out to him if they would like assistance in scheduling meetings with legislators during Legislative Days. He invites all to join the virtual Legislative Lunches, held on Mondays at noon during the legislative session, to engage on legislative topics.
- Heather Wendt, WACD Deputy Director, reminded the group of the need for clear, loud, and persistent messaging. WACD has created a number of tools for CD use. CD staff are asked to take the brief survey to help inform lobbying efforts (see link below). The postcard campaign is ongoing, and districts are asked to engage landowners in creating handwritten or electronic postcards conveying the positive impacts of conservation dollars. This year, WACD is partnering with 'Washington Grown' to utilize the segments they have filmed for conservation advocacy. Heather sent out a teaser that more advocacy opportunities are coming next week!
- Zorah Oppenheimer provided feedback that last year's Forest Health legislative effort felt confusing and suggested creating materials that provide greater clarity when presenting data. This could apply to all programs, not just Forest Health. Ryan thanked her for the feedback and will work on how best to share priorities with legislators.
- Emmett Wild requested an update on recently passed resolutions. Heather reported that there is a new Ways & Means Committee that recently met for the first time. They are working on a matrix to help identify priorities. They will be reaching out to CDs for input; the process is just getting underway, and there will be more information available in the next couple of weeks.
- Heather supplied the following links related to legislative activities:
  - WACD Legislative Day information - <https://wadistricts.us/wacd/advocacy/#legday2026>
  - Advocacy Opportunities - <https://wadistricts.us/wacd/advocacy/#advocacy2026>
  - Please take this brief 3-question survey to let our lobbyist, Brynn, know who has or will be using this resource. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SNL37ZK>. Survey Responses are due January 16th.

## Deeper Dive Topic: CPDS Update

- There was an emailed request for an update on the ISG IT project (aka MANATEE). Thomas Scheinbein, SCC Chief Information Officer, reported that the process has begun to replace CPDS. Initially, SCC worked with the contractor ISG on the project, and they provided updates to CDs. At the same time, it was determined that other projects were needed in addition to the CPDS replacement. As SCC has grown, there has been a need to have its own infrastructure and be separate from Ecology. The process has taken longer than initially expected because of the need for security reviews and the goal of doing the job right, rather than just quickly. At the same time, work is being done to determine what will need to happen for a CPDS replacement. They have slowed the project down purposely to ensure a good product and avoid missteps at buildout. Receiving the Business & Technology Transformation funding that was requested in the supplemental budget would help to accelerate the process.
- SCC no longer holds a contract with the consultant for this project. Zorah Oppenheimer requested periodic updates on the project, just less technical and not as frequent as before.
- Jennifer Boie asked if the project was paused because the supplemental budget was not moved forward. James Thompson responded that this is a very important initiative for SCC, and work has not stopped. There is a lot of work to be done organizing information to feed into the project; data is going through structural review, and the data dictionary is being created for useful decision making; all of that work continues. The work on “improving the way we do business” has been added to the project. James reinforced that SCC is committed to completing the project with new hardware and software, and CDs will have the opportunity to engage in the process where appropriate.

## Other Topics from the Roundtable Discussion Topic Tool

### ***Multi-biennium Contracts:***

- Sarah Moorehead requested an update on multi-biennium contracts. Sarah Groth responded that the work paused at the close of the biennium. She doesn't have a timeline for the work; however, they continue to work on the logistics with the Attorney General's office and using examples from other agencies. They continue to work on what the rollout of multi-biennium contracts would look like and what programs would be involved.
- Sarah Moorehead is hopeful that multi-biennium contracts could be implemented in time for the FY27-29 biennium and would like to see a deeper dive into the topic, particularly what the challenges are. If CDs are involved in the process, she feels that problems affecting CDs might be identified sooner, leading to a smoother rollout. Sarah Groth said that the goal is to have the work completed before the end

of this biennium and informed that the financial database provider is also working on the project, as the current system doesn't support multi-biennium contracts. Sarah Groth said there will be opportunities for CDs to provide feedback as the project progresses.

### **Website Accessibility Requirements:**

- Linda Lyshall suggested an update on Website Accessibility Requirements. Websites are required to comply with new ADA accessibility guidelines by April 2027 for small government entities. She requested guidance from SCC.
- On their website, MRSC provides information on [ADA Standards for Local Government Websites](#).
- Brandy Reed informed the group that Whatcom CD has been working on its new website, and the project has become more complicated and time-consuming than expected. Jessica said that SCC, like conservation districts, is considered a small government entity with the requirement for the website to be ADA-compliant by 2027. She is working on the project with guidance from the state Attorney General's office. Paige DeChambeau, SCC Communications Director, has been active in learning about website accessibility guidelines.
- Jessica put in a plug for MRSC and their legal services for CDs. Having websites that are ADA-compliant is the right thing to do and also ensures that it won't become a legal issue. She discourages linking pdf files on websites.
- Linda Lyshall suggested a WADE session on the topic. Paige, Aneka Sweeney, and Alison Crowley were suggested as staff to work on the session.
- The SCC Community Partnership Outreach (CPO) group meets monthly and discusses this topic. Please reach out to Paige for more information.

### **Other Topics and Reminders**

- Emailed question on **CREP reimbursement**: "Once we submit the one-time CREP reimbursement request letter and verification documentation, how quickly will landowners get paid by the WSCC? Response from Brian Cochrane: "Once I approve the request, the CD can cut a check. With my approval, SCC moves funds to the CD and the CD vouchers to get reimbursed, like all other transactions."
- Update submitted by Sarah Groth: The Returned Funds form is live! The returned funds form has been updated to combine the operating and capital funds all on one form. [You can find the form here](#) and on the [Grants, Contracts, and Finance webpage](#) under the Grants and Vouchers tab. Remember, if a project is cancelled or doesn't utilize all of the awarded funding, the sooner you return the funding, the sooner we can reallocate the funding to achieve even more conservation work.

### **Closing**

- Jessica Wilson thanked everyone for the suggestions to improve the Roundtable Discussion Topics Tool. Please continue adding ideas for upcoming Roundtable topics in the tool.

- Please reach out to Regional Managers, Project Managers, or Jessica ([jwilson@scc.wa.gov](mailto:jwilson@scc.wa.gov), Cell: 564-250-1865) with questions – especially those that are time-sensitive.
- Jessica will start right away to populate Roundtable agendas with discussion topics through March and will continue to slot topics throughout the coming months.
- Jean thanked everyone for their time, effort, and collaboration. The next Roundtable meeting is Thursday, February 12, 9:30-11:00 AM.