

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

Summary of Motions

September 21, 2026

- **Motion:** Alan Chapman moved to adopt the consent agenda. Second by Brad Bortner. Bruce McDonald offered a friendly amendment to correct the spelling of Leah Perkel's name in the June minutes, which was accepted. The consent agenda for the September board meeting was adopted.
- **Motion:** Jeff Schibel moved to approve the June and July financial reports as presented. Second by John McLean. The motion to accept the June and July WACD Financial Reports was approved.
- **Motion:** Brad Boertner moved to approve the RFP process as described in the Investment Manager RFP Memo. Second by Cindy Reed. The motion was adopted.
- **Motion:** Bruce McDonald moved to adopt the recommendations from the Supervisor Engagement work group. Second by Alan Chapman. Motion carried.
- **Motion:** Bruce McDonald moved to adopt the proposed changes to the resolution template with an expected 2027 roll out. Second by Mary Collins. Motion carried.

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

WACD Executive Office – Olympia, WA

Remote Connection through Zoom

September 21, 2026

Board Meeting Minutes

Members Present

Amy McKay, President (Whitman CD)

Jeff Schibel, Vice President (Lincoln County CD)

Elizabeth Bella, Secretary (Underwood CD)

Brad Bortner, National Director (Wahkiakum CD)

Alan Chapman, Northwest Area Director (Whatcom CD)

Bruce McDonald, Southwest Area Director (Lewis CD)

John Preston, North Central Area Director (Columbia Basin CD)

John McLean, North Central Area Director (Foster Creek CD)

Cindy Reed, South Central Area Director (North Yakima CD)

Russ Fick, Northeast Area Director (Pend Oreille CD)

Mary Collins, Southeast Area Director (Palouse CD)

Alison Crowley, WA Association of District Employees (Walla Walla County CD)

Others Present

Tom Salzer, WACD Executive Director
Heather Wendt, WACD Deputy Director
Ryan Baye, WACD Director of Legislative & Membership Services
Kris Neely, Spokane CD Associate Supervisor
Michael Tobin, District Manager (North Yakima CD)
Craig Nelson, Executive Director (Okanogan CD)
Kara Kaelber, District Manager (Franklin CD)
Marcella Appel, District Manager (Benton CD)

Vice President Jeff Schibel called the meeting to order at 6 o'clock. Ryan Baye conducted a roll call of members present to confirm a quorum.

New Board Members

Alison Crowley introduced herself as the new WADE Co-President, serving as an employee with Walla Walla County CD.

Russ Fick introduced himself as the new Northeast Area Director, serving as a supervisor with Pend Oreille Conservation District as a hay farmer with a few horses.

Brad Bortner introduced himself as the new WACD National Director, serving as a supervisor for Wahkiakum CD with a hay farm for horse owners and a former career as a wildlife biologist.

Area Focus

Kara Kaelber, Franklin CD, reported the district has been quite busy. They had several grants, ranging from EV charger installations at their district office to irrigation efficiencies. Kara celebrated the incorporation of the City of Pasco into the conservation district and being able to boost district services and programs, as well as their district's Wheat Week program turning 20 this year.

Mike Tobin, North Yakima CD, reported the district completed a large piping project last year that was featured during an SCC tour with additional work this year in that watershed to expand the impact of the project. He gave details about a partnership with the Wenas Irrigation District to help increase water availability in the area, and the district's focus on the area between the Selah gap and Union Gap.

Elizabeth Bella, Underwood CD, shared her district had been able to expand their district staff this year. District activities were showcased in the recent SCC tour. She also reported that a new UCD supervisor had been appointed by the Commission and mentioned the district's new Board Development Committee had been helpful in connecting with potential candidates.

Consent Agenda

Alan Chapman moved to adopt the consent agenda. Second by Brad Bortner. Bruce McDonald offered a friendly amendment to correct the spelling of Leah Perkel's name in the June minutes, which was accepted. The consent agenda for the September board meeting was adopted.

Financials

Heather Wendt presented the June financial report on behalf of Treasurer Cyndi Schaeffer. She covered both the income and expenses for the month of June as well as the end of the fiscal year. She made note of the withdrawals from the investment account, as planned in the board's approved budget. She answered questions about the reduced expenses at the PMC and their reduction in labor accounting for unexpected cost savings.

Heather Wendt presented the July financial report on behalf of Treasurer Cyndi Schaeffer. She described the yearly cash flow cycle for the benefit of the newest board members of both the Executive Office and the PMC divisions of WACD. Jeff Schibel moved to approve the June and July financial reports as presented. Second by John McLean. The motion to accept the June and July WACD Financial Reports was approved.

Heather Wendt presented a request from the Finance Committee to send out a Request for Proposals to potential investment firms. She explained the Finance Committee reviewed the performance of the current portfolio manager as per WACD policy and found the benchmark fund used to measure performance had outperformed the actively managed account. Brad Boertner moved to approve the RFP process as described in the Investment Manager RFP Memo. Second by Cindy Reed. Motion carried.

WACD Governance

Heather Wendt presented the recommendations of the Supervisor Engagement Work Group and their report. The resulting conversation amongst the board members included potentially seeking additional responsibilities from the area directors for engagement among district supervisors. Bruce McDonald moved to adopt the recommendations from the Supervisor Engagement Work Group. Second by Alan Chapman. Motion carried.

Ryan Baye informed the board of directors which area director positions were scheduled to be voted on at the area meetings in October.

Ryan Baye asked the board of directors for discussion on potential amendments to the WACD bylaws, so staff could seek feedback on any proposals during the area meetings. The subsequent board discussion included several potential options to modify the current dues structure. There were questions about the bylaw process, the role of the board versus the role of the membership, and previous WACD funding models.

WACD Operations

John Knox was not able to attend and wrote a nursery report that was shared with board members.

Heather Wendt presented the work done by the Sustainable Funding Committee over the summer. She shared the five funding model options that were considered by the committee, and the potential cost for a consultant to take any proposals and get feedback from potential stakeholders. The subsequent board conversation included the increased political awareness in districts, what would happen with current state funding, the feasibility of district funding being popular enough to support a tax increase, and concerns of the cost of the consultants. President Amy McKay solicited the board members for a motion; with no motion, Heather Wendt promised to share the board's feedback with the Sustainable Funding Committee to reevaluate potential next steps.

The board consented to delaying the discussion of the Business plan to a later meeting in the interest of time.

WACD Advocacy

Heather Wendt reported on the work done over the summer by the Ways & Means Committee to address the idea of a WACD policy book, updating the resolution template, and how to address new and emerging issues. Bruce McDonald moved to adopt the proposed changes to the resolution template with an expected 2027 roll out. Second by Mary Collins. Motion carried.

Ryan Baye updated the board on the work done to secure a bill sponsor for the 2027 legislative session on the topic of district elections.

Tom Salzer shared with the board the necessary information gathered by WACD staff to submit an amicus brief.

Heather Wendt relayed the conversations from Friday's Legislative Engagement meeting to the board.

Announcements

Amy McKay announced there were written reports available in the Box folder from USDA-NRCS and Jeff Schibel's write up from attending the NACD Summer meeting.

Heather Wendt shared Jack Clark at Benton CD has passed away.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 pm.