

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

March 2025 Board meeting

Summary of Motions

Motion: Doug Rushton moved to adopt the remaining agenda items as presented. Second by Alan Chapman. Motion Carried.

Motion: John Preston moved to approve the February meeting minutes. Second by Alan Chapman. Motion carried.

Motion: Barbara Bailey moved to approve the financials as presented. Second by Mark Craven. Motion carried.

Motion: Doug Rushton moved to grant a one-time exemption to the reimbursement policy time-limit. Second by Mark Craven. Motion carried. Abstention by Heather Smith.

Motion: Jeff Schibel moved to approve the FY 2026 Annual Plan of Work. Second by John Preston. Motion carried.

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

Remote Connection through Zoom

March 17, 2025

Board Meeting Minutes

Members Present

Amy McKay, President (Whitman CD)
Jeff Schibel, Vice President (Lincoln County CD)
Barbara Bailey, Secretary (Underwood CD)
Mark Craven, Treasurer (Snohomish CD)
Doug Rushton, National Director (Thurston CD)
Mike Mumford, Past President (Pend Oreille CD)
Alan Chapman, Northwest Area Director (Whatcom CD)
David Vliet, Northwest Area Director (Kitsap CD)
Bruce McDonald, Southwest Area Director (Lewis CD)
Heather Smith, Southwest Area Director (Grays Harbor 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)
John W. Floyd, Northeast Area Director (Pend Oreille CD)
Zorah Oppenheimer, WADE Designee (Clark CD)

Others Present

Tom Salzer, WACD Executive Director

Heather Wendt, WACD Director of Development & Engagement
Jim Brown, WACD Director of Nursery Operations
Ryan Baye, WACD Director of Legislative & Membership Services
Roylene Comes at Night, USDA-NRCS Washington State Conservationist
Craig Nelson, Okanogan CD Executive Director
Kristina Ribellia, Columbia Basin CD Executive Director
Becca Hebron, Foster Creek CD District Manager
Ryan Williams, Cascadia CD Executive Director
Jan Thomas, Center for Technical Development Co-Lead
Kris Neely, Spokane CD Associate Supervisor
Brynn Brady, WACD Lobbyist

Vice President Jeff Schibel called the meeting to order at 6 PM. Ryan Baye conducted a roll call of the officers and directors to confirm a quorum was present.

Brynn Brady reported on legislative activities in Olympia since the last WACD board meeting. She reported on the various budgets proposed by Governor Inslee, Governor Ferguson, and Senate Republicans over the previous weeks, with the expectation that operating budget proposals would be released on Monday, March 24. She ended with the general prediction that legislators will not be wanting to fund new programs in the current budget climate.

Doug Rushton moved to adopt the remaining agenda items as presented. Second by Alan Chapman. Motion Carried.

Public Comment

There was no public comment offered.

North Central Area Focus

Kristina Ribellia presented on behalf of Columbia Basin Conservation District. She shared the district's recent major projects in securing funding for the Odessa Aquifer Groundwater Replacement Program and Moses Lake harmful algae reduction. They secured funding for both projects and would be focused on implementation this year. She also discussed the district's new office and their remodeling process. She ended up an announcement to expect a celebration of life for Marie Lotz later this year as part of the district's 80th anniversary.

Ryan Williams presented on behalf of Cascadia Conservation District. He covered the district's programs, highlighting their Forest & Community Wildfire Resiliency Program with its prescribed burn associations, biochar workshops, home hardening program, and strategic fuel breaks on private lands. He also shared information on their various education programs.

Becca Hebron presented on behalf of Foster Creek CD. She reported on the district's agriculture viability program, their watershed planning, engagement with the Mansfield community, and their water quality management projects. She also reported on their "Conservation at its Roots" farm tour last October and their plans for the third year of Camp Sagebrush during the summer.

Craig Nelson presented on behalf of Okanogan CD. He relayed his district's frustrations with Community Wildfire Defense Grant applications. He also presented on district operations, including cash flow issues, finalizing the district's first water right purchase for the Okanogan Water Bank, and developing a drought mitigation plan for the county. He ended with a recap of the district's frustrations to do with DDT and lead soil mitigation for growers under a Department of Ecology grant.

Center for Technical Development Presentation

Jan Thomas and Ryan Williams presented updates within CTD and their excitement around new education software and shared future opportunities for district staff and supervisors.

Partner Reports

Roylene Comes at Night presented on behalf of USDA-NRCS. She announced that the 1,400 probationary agency employees were back and being onboarded as per court order. She also shared operational updates on contract reviews and the impact of the federal budget continuing resolution on the agency. She thanked WACD for their support, having heard from many partners recently.

Zorah Oppenheimer presented on behalf of the Washington Association of District Employees. She shared that the 2025 WADE conference schedule and registration was now available, along with nominations for Employee of the Year.

Doug Rushton presented on behalf of the National Association of Conservation Districts. He reported the constant changes at the federal level, with court orders, lawsuits, and executive orders coming every week. He asked people with questions to reach out directly to NACD staff to get the latest information.

Previous Meeting Minutes

Barbara Bailey presented the February draft minutes for consideration. John Preston moved to approve the February meeting minutes. Second by Alan Chapman. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Mark Craven presented the February Financial Report for the board's review. He announced that the PMC expected to reach the point of net profitability in March. He detailed financial information like the monthly activity of the Investment Account, progress on WACD's grants, and the purchasing of certificates of deposit. He ended with a three year review comparison of income and expenses.

Ryan Baye presented the financial outcomes from the 2024 Annual Conference, thanks to Lori McLaughlin for compiling the information. He shared the income from sponsorships, grants, and registration and how the goal is for the conference to be a revenue neutral event. He also offered a historical look-back to previous conferences as a comparison. Barbara Bailey moved to approve the financials as presented. Second by Mark Craven. Motion carried.

Ryan Baye informed the board of a reimbursement request by a board member who attended the December meeting in Spokane but had submitted their request outside the 30-day time window as outlined in policy. He was asking the Board to consider granting an exception to policy for this reimbursement request. Doug Rushton moved to grant a one-time exemption to the reimbursement policy time-limit. Second by Mark Craven. Motion carried. Abstention by Heather Smith.

WACD Operations

Jim Brown informed the board that the Plant Materials Center was down to the last two or three days of harvest, with 1.7 million plants already lifted from the ground with 1.5 million sold. The transplant plugs would be coming in this week, to go in the ground immediately once harvest was complete. He also reported that a memorial for Lynn Brown would be on April 12. Doug Rushton asked Jim to express the board's appreciation to the crew and staff for their work this season.

Heather Wendt presented the draft Annual Plan of Work to the board for their consideration, having incorporated comments from the two month comment period. Jeff Schibel moved to approve the FY 2026 Annual Plan of Work. Second by John Preston. Motion carried.

Ryan Baye reported on the progress of those planning to attend the D.C. Fly-In next week, with the main topics being sharing the importance of conservation districts, the Farm Bill, and the impact of the freeze on federal grants and contracts on WACD's membership. He invited anyone interested in knowing more to attend NACD's legislative briefings during the week.

Committee Updates

Heather Wendt did a quarterly committee update: sharing that the Sustainable Funding Committee was meeting every month, that the CTD Work Group (as directed by recent WACD resolution) would be meeting soon, and that the Rates and Charges Working Group was meeting every ten days or so.

WACD Advocacy

Ryan Baye updated the board on the progress of the rates and charges bill, HB 1488, and the changes made by the legislature to the bill.

Tom Salzer presented to the board the WACD budget priorities letter written to state legislature budget writers last week and sought feedback. He answered questions about the impact of potential cuts to the Conservation Commission and conservation districts, planning for the supplemental budget cycle, and legislative outreach opportunities for districts and supervisors.

Announcements

David Vliet announced that the recent election at Kitsap CD was being challenged, with more information to come at the WSCC meeting in May.

Bruce McDonald announced that Wahkiakum County had voted to opt-in to VSP, with the expectation that the conservation district would be a part of that work.

Meeting adjourned at 8:38.