

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

May 19, 2025
Summary of Motions

Motion: Doug Rushton moved to approve the agenda as presented, with the addition of the New Checking Account Proposal agenda item under the Treasurer's Report. Second by Jeff Schibel. Motion carried.

Motion: Mark Craven moved adoption of the April meeting minutes. Second by Alan Chapman. Motion carried.

Motion: Jeff Schibel moved to approve the March and April Financial Reports. Second by Barbara Bailey. Motion carried.

Motion: Doug Rushton moved to approve the \$55,000 funds transfer request as presented. Second by Mike Mumford. Motion carried.

Motion: Chevelle Yeckel moved to adopt the Sustainable Funding Committee and Livestock Committee policies as presented. Second by Heather Smith. Motion carried with an abstention from Doug Rushton.

Motion: Doug Rushton moved to create a deputy director position and promote Heather Wendt to that role, effective immediately. Second by Chevelle Yeckel Motion carried.

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

Remote Connection through Zoom
May 19, 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)
Heather Smith, Southwest Area Director (Grays Harbor 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)

John W. Floyd, Northeast Area Director (Pend Oreille CD)
Mary Collins, Southeast Area Director (Palouse CD)
Chevelle Yeckel, Washington Association of District Employees

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
Kris Neely, Spokane CD Associate Supervisor
Roylene Comes at Night, USDA-NRCS WA State Conservationist
James Thompson, WSCC Executive Director
Nikki Atkins, Lewis CD District Manager
Sarah Moorehead, Thurston CD Executive Director
Zorah Oppenheimer, Clark CD Executive Director

President McKay called the meeting to order at 6:00. Ryan Baye took a roll call of the officers and directors present to confirm a quorum. Amy McKay asked for an additional item on the agenda, a proposal for a new checking account. Doug Rushton moved to approve the agenda as presented, with the addition of the New Checking Account Proposal agenda item under the Treasurer's Report. Second by Jeff Schibel. Motion carried.

Area Highlight

Zorah Oppenheimer brought forward to the board her concerns about forest health funding for Washington's conservation districts. That the reduction in funding from the state legislature was cut down to below maintenance level. She noted that the initial commission request was believed to be too low and that the conversation from Legislative Day wasn't sufficiently clear. That the mixed messaging might have contributed to the reduced funding this biennium.

Nikki Atkins presented a slideshow of Lewis CD projects: a VSP wetlands project, a fish habitat/bank stabilization project, pictures of forty-four acres planted under the Commission's Riparian Grant Program, and photos from recent Lewis County Stream Team events.

Ryan Baye shared with the board a letter from Pacific CD written to the Conservation Commission with the district's opposition to proposed riparian grant program guidelines allowing for the purchase of private lands with program funding.

Sarah Moorehead, speaking on behalf of Thurston CD, seconded the issues raised by Clark and Pacific CDs. She also spoke to her recent experience traveling to DC and meeting with legislators as part of "Puget Sound Day on the Hill". She also recommended WACD consider having issues based "area highlights" at their regular meetings rather than geographic.

Heather Smith, having traveled to several SW area conservation districts recently as SW Area Director, reiterated the constant theme of the importance of forest health funding. She also saw a need for supervisor training opportunities for districts.

Partner Reports

James Thompson discussed the Conservation Commission's strategic planning meeting and business meeting in Yakima the previous week. He shared the Commission is waiting for the budget to be signed by the Governor, along with every other state entity. He mentioned the June 12 All-districts meeting and the June 18th special Commission meeting. He answered questions about the two new commissioners expected for the June meeting, with a new DNR representative and new Governor-appointed Commissioner replacing Daryl Williams.

Chevelle Yeckel stated that 293 individuals were signed up for the WADE Conference in Leavenworth. She shared that districts were very busy doing projects and starting their end of the year reports. She also reported on the Washington State Envirothon Competition happening this upcoming weekend.

Doug Rushton shared updates from the National Association of Conservation Districts regarding activities in DC and on new NACD employees.

Roylene Comes At Night provided information about the Natural Resources Conservation Service. She shared that the agency had lost 29 more employees in the last Deferred Retirement Program. NRCS have been given approval to pay on existing agreements and enter into new agreements and amend existing agreements.

Previous Meeting Minutes

Secretary Barbara Bailey presented the April meeting minutes as written by staff and reviewed by her. Mark Craven moved adoption of the April meeting minutes. Second by Alan Chapman. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Mark Craven presented the March and April Financial Reports, thanking the board for their patience after Lori McLaughlin's mother passed away. He noted the new cover sheet format as recommended by the recent audit to make these easier to understand at a glance and highlighted the month to month changes to the investment portfolio. Jeff Schibel moved to approve the March and April Financial Reports. Second by Barbara Bailey. Motion carried.

Heather Wendt presented to the board a funds transfer request, that WACD's Executive Office Division needed an transfer from the investment account to cover expenses before FY25 dues payments started coming in. She answered questions about WACD's expected

cashflow. Doug Rushton moved to approve the \$55,000 funds transfer request as presented. Second by Mike Mumford. Motion carried.

Heather Wendt also presented to the board a request to transfer WACD's bank account from Banner Bank, that a new feature of Banner Bank had caused WACD staff to be unable to cash their checks on weekends. She answered questions about WACD's direct deposit policy, the security features in place, and the impact of the bank account change on WACD's financials. Heather Wendt decided to bring a formal resolution and additional information to the June board meeting.

Heather Wendt reviewed the budget development process that occurred with the Finance Committee ahead of the June board meeting. She shared that the Executive Committee had reviewed the Finance Committee's budget and asked that a second draft budget be prepared for board consideration that included cost of living adjustments for staff. Heather also mentioned the concept of asking the districts for additional funding to fund special projects; she led a conversation about districts' ability to pay current dues, WACD's value to membership, dues structure, promoting WACD's accomplishments, and including an "other" option in the supplemental dues letter.

WACD Operations

Jim Brown reported that revenue and expenses are up at the nursery in Bow. He was worried about a potential loss in plant orders for the next year with the cut in AmeriCorps positions that usually supplied the labor to the PMC's customers. He reported on a cooler compressor breaking down and a potential cost-share opportunity with Skagit CD. Jim was concerned about a potential tariff impact on costs because the cheapest replacement part was coming out of Canada, and that the two other working compressors are the same age as the one that failed. He also informed the board that an irrigation main line blew, which would cost approximately \$1,000 to fix.

Ryan Baye updated the board on the progress of the 2025 Annual Conference and asked for input on the draft program included in the meeting materials.

Ryan Baye also updated the board on the lack of interest in the area director vacancies in the NE, SC, and SE areas. That emails out to the supervisors in the NE and SC areas had gone unanswered. He hoped that new supervisors being elected or appointed in 2025 would be more interested in the positions.

WACD Committees

Heather Wendt shared with the board on the progress of strategies developed through the Plant Materials Taskforce and potential next steps.

Alan Chapman informed the board on the recent Livestock Committee

Ryan Baye presented draft policies for consideration regarding the Sustainable Funding Committee and the Livestock Committee, since the board had not adopted any policies for these new committees since their creation. Chevelle Yeckel moved to adopt the Sustainable Funding Committee and Livestock Committee policies as presented. Second by Heather Smith. Motion carried with an abstention from Doug Rushton.

WACD Staffing

Tom Salzer presented a proposed job description for the creation of a WACD Deputy Director and the selection of Heather Wendt to that position. He led a discussion amongst the board on WACD's staffing structure, the importance of succession planning to WACD, the potential workload on Heather, the overlap of her old and new job descriptions, and whether or not the Deputy Director position would continue after Heather's assumed eventual promotion to Executive Director. Doug Rushton moved to create a deputy director position and promote Heather Wendt to that role, effective immediately. Second by Chevelle Yeckel Motion carried.

Announcements

Tom Salzer announced he would be taking time off after his wife's recent hospitalization.

John McLean announced that Foster Creek CD's Camp Sagebrush program made the front page of the Western Ag Reporter newspaper.

Meeting adjourned at 9:14.