

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

February 23, 2026
Summary of Motions

- **Motion:** David Vliet moved to adopt the meeting agenda as amended. Second by Sarah Moorehead. Motion carried.
- **Motion:** Sarah Moorehead moved to approve the items on the consent agenda. Second by John Preston. Motion carried.
- **Motion:** Alan Chapman moved to add \$4,000 to the travel line item in the budget. Second by David Vliet. Motion carried.

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

WACD Executive Office – Olympia, WA
Remote Connection through Zoom
February 23, 2026
Board Meeting Minutes

Members Present

Amy McKay, President (Whitman CD)
Jeff Schibel, Vice President (Lincoln County CD)
Elizabeth Bella, Secretary (Underwood CD)
Cyndi Schaeffer, Treasurer (Snohomish CD)
Heather Smith, 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)
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)
Stephen Matsen, South Central Area Director (Eastern Klickitat CD)
John W. Floyd, Northeast Area Director (Pend Oreille CD)
Mary Collins, Southeast Area Director (Palouse CD)
Sarah Moorehead, Washington Association of District Employees (Thurston CD)

Others Present

Tom Salzer, WACD Executive Director
Heather Wendt, WACD Deputy Director
John Knox, WACD Director of Nursery Operations
Ryan Baye, WACD Director of Legislative & Membership Services
Craig Nelson, Okanogan CD Executive Director

Kris Neely, Spokane CD Associate Supervisor
Elsa Bowen, Lincoln County CD District Manager
Dave Hedrick, Ferry CD District Manager
Mary Malone, Pend Oreille CD Executive Director
John Keatley, Cowlitz CD Supervisor
Jim Mallet, Cowlitz CD Supervisor
Darin Houpt, Cowlitz CD District Manager
Leah Perkel, Clark CD Supervisor
Dean Longrie, Clark CD Supervisor
James Thompson, Conservation Commission Executive Director

President McKay called the meeting to order at 6:00. Ryan Baye conducted a roll call of members present to confirm a quorum.

Adopting the Agenda

Heather Smith asked to add the bill on environmental crimes to the WACD Advocacy agenda item. David Vliet moved to adopt the meeting agenda as amended, second by Sarah Moorehead. Motion carried.

Public Comment

No one from the public wished to speak during the comment period.

Area Focus

Elsa Bowen presented information from Lincoln County CD on the fire recovery in their area and the concern around drought. She also reiterated Lincoln County CD's concern for the requirement for districts to sign producer contracts in the Conservation Reserve Program.

Dave Hedrick spoke on behalf of Ferry CD, and the decline of agriculture in the county. He also informed the WACD board of an upcoming video featuring Ferry CD on the Washington Grown program and the district's concern about the loss of funding for a staff person. Dave answered questions about agricultural viability, the next generation of producers, and the needs of the people living in the area.

Mary Malone shared Pend Oreille CD planned to give away 4,000 plants this spring and highlighted the district's focus on shoreline projects along the Pend Oreille River. She answered questions about the metrics recorded in their projects.

Kris Neely reported Spokane CD was having a better than average tree sale, and provided information about a potential joint project between the City of Spokane and the conservation district to create Miyawaki forests in Eastern Washington.

WACD Correspondence

John Keatley and Darin Houpt spoke to the letter sent to the WACD Board of Directors by Cowlitz and Wahkiakum CDs on the need for WACD to be more responsive in reacting to

emerging issues of statewide importance. There was a conversation amongst board members and guests regarding how to find both a long-term solution and a short-term solution in engaging more of the membership outside of the resolution process, potential solutions, and balancing the need to act quickly while ensuring districts and supervisors had the ability to participate. The conversation ended with Executive Director Tom Salzer asking for time for staff to bring something actionable forward at the next meeting.

Introductions of New Members

Heather Smith introduced herself to the board as the new National Director and shared her background of their farm and business in Grays Harbor.

Stephen Matsen shared his background of living all across Washington and coming back to farm near Bickleton, that he has recently retired, and was getting involved in more organizations.

Commented [EB1]: All over Washington?

Consent Agenda

Sarah Moorehead moved to approve the items on the consent agenda. Second by John Preston. Motion carried.

Financials

Treasurer Cyndi Schaeffer presented the January financials to the board, highlighting the amount of cash on hand, performance of the Edward Jones Investment account, and the amount of aged receivables. She also relayed to the board members the outcomes of the Finance Committee meeting and their discussion of changing investment bankers, as well as her work with WACD staff to develop a document each month that is clear and concise on WACD's financials.

Tom Salzer sought permission from the board for additional funds to send a third individual to the Congressional Fly-In in DC in March. Alan Chapman moved to add \$4,000 to the travel line item in the budget. Second by David Vliet. Motion carried.

WACD Operations

Director of Nursery Operations John Knox reported there were 200,000 additional plants in the cooler compared to the same time the previous year, and that the PMC would be able to satisfy all remaining orders with their current stock. He also gave information on seed collecting trips by Jim Brown and the established partnership with the Department of Natural Resources creating a seed orchard on Whidbey Island.

Heather Wendt presented on her proposal to have a different schedule on legislative workshops in 2026, seeking to offer a virtual meeting in late April and an in-person meeting in September.

WACD Advocacy

Ryan Baye reported on the success of the 2026 WACD Legislative Day and the intense interest to expand in 2027, with board members sharing comments on their experience this year. Ryan also shared details of the House and Senate versions of the supplemental operating and capital budgets and how WACD planned to engage with legislators and districts during the remainder of the legislative session. He also sketched what legislative bills were still active that districts had expressed an interest in.

Ryan Baye led a conversation about the topic of conservation district elections, what were the “red lines” around the current proposals, and how WACD should be preparing for 2027. Board members and guests discussed the merits of potential changes to the composition of districts, the need to educate legislators, and what challenges existed to seeing reforms being adopted.

Ryan Baye asked board members to seek out topics from districts on what messages to carry to the Congressional Fly-In.

Announcements

Ryan Baye announced a new Southwest Area Director would be named in time for the March meeting.

President McKay adjourned the meeting at 8:30.