

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

September 15, 2025

Summary of Motions

Motion: Alan Chapman moved to adopt the agenda as presented, with the inclusion of the June Financials to be presented during the Treasurer's Report. Second by Cindy Reed. Motion carried.

Motion: Cindy Reed moved to adopt the June board meeting minutes as presented. Second by Doug Rushton. Motion carried.

Motion: Sarah Moorehead moved to approve the June, July, and August financial reports. Second by John Preston. Motion carried.

Motion: Doug Rushton moved to add John Knox to the WACD Banner Bank signature card. Second by Barbara Bailey. Motion carried.

Motion: Alan Chapman moved to adopt the presented changes to the Employees Manual. Second by Cindy Reed. Motion carried.

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

WACD Executive Office – Olympia, WA

Remote Connection through Zoom

September 15, 2025

Board Meeting Minutes

Members Present

Amy McKay, President (Whitman CD)

Jeff Schibel, Vice President (Lincoln County CD)

Barbara Bailey, Secretary (Underwood CD)

Doug Rushton, National Director (Thurston CD)

Alan Chapman, Northwest Area Director (Whatcom 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)

Sarah Moorehead, Washington Association of District Employees (Thurston CD)

Others Present

Tom Salzer, WACD Executive Director
Heather Wendt, WACD Deputy Director
Jim Brown, WACD Director of Nursery Operations
John Knox, WACD Assistant Nursery Manager
Ryan Baye, WACD Director of Legislative & Membership Services
Craig Nelson, Okanogan CD District Manager
Zorah Oppenheimer, Clark CD Executive Director
Jennifer Boie, Palouse CD District Manager
Evan Bauder, Mason CD Executive Director
Ryan Williams, Cascadia CD Executive Director
Kara Kaelber, Franklin CD District Manager
Marcella Appel, Benton CD District Manager
Roylene Comes At Night, USDA-NRCS State Conservationist

Vice President Jeff Schibel called the meeting to order at 6 PM. Ryan Baye conducted a roll call of those present to confirm a quorum. Alan Chapman moved to adopt the agenda as presented, with the inclusion of the June Financials to be presented during the Treasurer's Report. Second by Cindy Reed. Motion carried.

Public Comment

No one wished to speak during the public comment period.

Area Focus

Cindy Reed shared that North Yakima CD was content, and their staff were productive.

Barbara Bailey spoke about fire recovery work by Underwood CD in White Salmon, additional fire prevention planning in Skamania County, and their planned legislative tour in October.

Marcella Appel talked about Benton CD's legislative tour this summer, their project removing water star grass from the Yakima River, and her experiences as a new district manager.

Kara Kaelber presented Franklin CD's new tool sharing library, their upcoming no-till/low-till drill demonstration, and their preparation for a Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant application to encourage reduced tillage practices in the South Central Washington area.

Partner Reports

Roylene Comes At Night spoke to EQIP funding in Washington state, as well as USDA-NRCS's expected FY26 budget, and some of the priorities shared by NRCS leadership at a

recent meeting of all the state conservationists. She answered questions about closing NRCS offices in Washington, contract renewals for farmers, and RCPP grant application information.

Doug Rushton shared information about the NACD 2026 Annual Meeting in February and an expected scholarship for first-time supervisor attendees. He also shared details and answered questions about NACD grants.

State Focus

Ryan Baye gave background on this new agenda item, which the board discussed in June, the creation of an agenda item with a statewide focus and inviting comment, rather than solely based on regions. The district managers asked for the Riparian Grant Program to be the topic for September, and a copy of a letter from Clark CD to the Conservation Commission was included in the board meeting packet.

Zorah Oppenheimer noted her letter had many details and acknowledged the riparian grant program was representative of all the current issues with the Commission.

Sarah Moorehead felt the biggest issue was how WACD can work with the Commission, at both the staff and Commissioner level, on the issues that are causing challenges in districts. She wanted the board to have a thoughtful discussion on something that is impacting districts.

Jennifer Boie saw a lot of growing pains for the Conservation Commission. She believed everything about this round of grant funding was backwards in regard to communication about current funding, requesting proposals without a programmatic guide, and having a large amount of money being awarded in a very short period of time. That all of this did not set up the districts for success.

Evan Bauder echoed the comment that the Riparian Grant Program was a surrogate case for several issues. That districts had shared their concerns with Commission staff, their concerns weren't addressed, and the identified issues are negatively impacting districts. That he had given up engaging with Commission staff and was solely going to engage via written comments.

Craig Nelson, Sarah Moorehead, Zorah Oppenheimer, and Jennifer Boie shared additional comments to further illustrate their concerns.

Board meeting minutes

Secretary Barbara Bailey presented the June board meeting minutes for approval. Cindy Reed moved to adopt the June board meeting minutes as presented. Second by Doug Rushton. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Heather Wendt presented the June financial report, noting a different format to convert this report for the Annual Business Meeting. Heather also presented the July financial report, with no special notes. She also reported on the August financial report and noted the truck replacement. Sarah Moorehead moved to approve the June, July, and August financial reports. Second by John Preston. Motion carried.

Heather Wendt shared with the board that 37 of 45 conservation districts had paid dues for FY25, noting that the pattern was behind the payment schedule of previous years but that cash flow and reducing funding were impacting districts. Heather also noted that \$14,000 in supplemental dues was received.

Heather Wendt reported that the mini-audit for the year was underway, that Lori McLaughlin had given the auditor their first round of requested information.

Heather Wendt asked the board to approve the addition of John Knox to the Banner Bank signature card with his promotion to Nursery Manager. Doug Rushton moved to add John Knox to the WACD Banner Bank signature card. Second by Barbara Bailey. Motion carried.

WACD Operations

Jim Brown reported on the operations of the Plant Material Center: the purchase of a vehicle to replace the 1978 Dodge pickup, the reduction of quarterly payments to the IRS at the recommendation of the accountant, the hiring of Zinny Hansen as Assistant Manager, and that this would be his last WACD board meeting. John Knox gave additional information on nursery operations and his planning for the start of harvest, with the promise of keeping Jim around for as long as he's willing.

Heather Wendt introduced a proposed strategic plan for the next five years to the board, based on the session at the PMC in June. She would send the strategic plan out for comment by the membership and would seek additional feedback at the area meetings.

Heather Wendt presented updates to the WACD employee handbook, taking advantage of the enrollment with Associated Industries earlier this spring to utilize their resources. She mentioned extensive changes to the employee accommodations and sick leave policies. Alan Chapman moved to adopt the presented changes to the Employees Manual. Second by Cindy Reed. Motion carried.

Heather Wendt updated the board on changes made to the contract with NRCS, changed contract language, and the reduction of funds for the changed contract deliverables. She also noted initial conversations had started around FY26 and potential opportunities to engage the WACD Tribal Relations Committee.

Heather Wendt shared with the board a proposal by NRCS to update the Statewide Conservation Partnership MOU.

WACD Advocacy

Ryan Baye briefed the board on CD legislative tours in 2025, based on the desire for more assistance by legislative districts.

Heather Wendt briefed the board on the legislative postcard campaign that was one of her summer projects.

WACD Governance

Ryan Baye gave information to the board on the 2025 Area Meeting schedule and answered questions about registration.

Ryan Baye informed the board members of which area directors were up for election this year, with additional area director vacancies to be filled.

Ryan Baye sought feedback from the board on potential proposals to change the WACD bylaws, with no proposals shared.

Ryan Baye presented the first draft of policy language to guide the new Ways & Means Committee. He answered questions about the purpose of the Ways & Means Committee and whether the committee would also be responsible for the WACD Annual Plan.

WACD Events

Ryan Baye unveiled the schedule for the 2025 WACD Annual Conference.

Heather Wendt shared that over \$15,000 in sponsorships for the WACD Conference was secured. She was reaching out to the many ag commissions to engage the different commodity groups.

Ryan Baye presented three proposals from potential hosts for the 2026/2027 Annual Conference. Board members discussed permutations of the Annual Conference schedule and wanted to see different schedule options in the hopes of better attendance by supervisors.

Announcements

Ryan Baye announced he would be leaving on Friday for a two-week trip to Turkey and Europe as part of a church trip.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 PM.