



Washington Association of Conservation Districts
2009 Final Resolutions

2009 Resolutions		
09-01	Passed	Annual partnership meeting between WACD, WSCC, and the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE)
09-02	Passed	Semi-Annual WACD Resolutions Status Report
09-03	Passed	Adoption of the Standardized Six-Section Conservation Plan Format and Planning Protocol
09-04	Passed	Development of a Technical Staff Training, Certification, and Job Approval Authority (JAA) System
09-05	Passed	WACD request NACD opposition to Clean Water Restoration Act
09-07	Passed	Supervisor Training Requirements
09-10	Passed	Area Public Works Roster
09-12	Passed	DOE allow local building standards for cost-shared building projects
09-13	Passed	Researching Changes to the State Public Records Act
09-14	Passed	Amending Chapter 90.80 RCW (Water Conservancy Boards)
09-16	Passed	Requiring SEPA review for water rights transfer at the point of transfer
09-17	Passed	Explore a Pilot Project for Conservation District Management of a Public Lands Parcel
09-18	Passed	Recognition of hydropower as a renewable resource in Washington State
09-19	Passed	Salmon Recovery Funding Board Policy Revisions
09-21	Passed	Sales Tax Exemption
09-22	Passed	Agricultural Burn Fees
09-23	Passed	Uniform and Equitable Landowner Labor Rates
09-24	Passed	Federal Clean Water Act Navigable Waters
09-25	Passed	Permitting for renewable energy components as part of conservation practices
09-26	Passed	Establishment of accurate NRCS conservation practice cost rates
09-27	Passed	Revisions to NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program evaluation criteria
09-28	Passed	Beaver be Gone
09-29	Passed	Improve Criteria for Cooperator Participation in Conservation Stewardship Program
09-31	Passed	Direct Seed Interpretations
09-33	Passed	Air Quality



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Resolution 09-01

Title: Annual Partnership Meeting between WACD, WSCC, and the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE)

Problem:

DOE manages the Centennial Clean Water Fund and the Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Fund grant programs in Washington State. Most conservation districts across our state have grants in these programs. Over the past several years, a large number of districts have experienced issues including DOE's delay in processing vouchers, questioning activities related to the projects, being asked to change methods of billing (i.e. task vs. objective). In many cases, several CDs have sought assistance from WACD and the WSCC to find resolution. In many cases these issues cannot be foreseen by districts as they are not outlined in the Grant Administration Manual that is put out by DOE and often times, Districts are being asked to make changes that could violate CD policies and procedures, as well as contractual obligations.

Recommendation:

WACD and the WSCC work with DOE to discuss the processes and any issues that CDs are facing involving grant programs managed by DOE.

Presented by: Thurston Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-02

Title: Semi-Annual WACD Resolutions Status Report

Problem:

Conservation District staff and supervisors develop resolutions each year with good intentions. In many cases CD personnel don't hear about the progress be on those resolutions. This occasionally results in similar resolutions coming before the membership in later years. Currently, one report is published and distributed at the annual meeting, which a limited number of CD personnel have the opportunity to see.

Recommendation:

That WACD produce a semi-annual report in June or July of each year, listing all resolutions on the books and reporting progress being made on each resolution. This report should be distributed via email at a minimum to each CD Chair and Manager and made available on the WACD website to allow time for review and discussion at the local level.

Presented by: Thurston Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-03

Title: Adoption of the Standardized Six-Section Conservation Plan Format and Planning Protocol

Problem:

Currently there are several different “Conservation Plan” formats in use in Washington State. Format can vary markedly since the NRCS National Planning Procedures Handbook does not specifically prescribe how a conservation plan is to look, but rather what must be in a plan.

The Conservation Planning & District Technical Employees Development Work Group has developed a standardized six-Section Conservation Plan Format that maintains a minimum standard for content. Furthermore, with input from NRCS, the Work Group has developed a Nine-Step Planning Process Protocol based on the NRCS National Planning Procedures Handbook for use by the conservation districts of Washington State. This Plan format and Protocol include a standard method and criteria for facilitating the update of livestock nutrient management plans, e.g. DNMP and CNMP.

The format and protocol have been reviewed and vetted by technical staff from all CD’s in the state, NRCS State Office personnel, and various other statewide partners and stakeholders including, but not limited to, Ecology, WSDA, WDFW, Dairy Federation, Cattlemen’s Association, Cattle Feeders, etc.

Recommendation:

WACD and the WSCC formally adopt the Standardized Six-Section Conservation Plan Format and Nine-Step Planning Protocol developed by the Conservation Planning & District Technical Employees Development Work Group as The Standard with the desire and expectation that all districts will use it.

Presented by: Thurston Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-04

Title: Development of a Technical Staff Training, Certification, and Job Approval Authority (JAA) System

Problem:

The conservation planning paradigm has been embraced by legislators and agencies as an effective and economical means of reconciling the needs of individual landowners and the environment. With substantial investments of taxpayer funds has come an expectation that the technical services and products provided by conservation districts will be technically sound and scientifically defensible. The Commission is accountable for the dollars it passes through to districts. District Boards and staff are accountable for the quality of the technical assistance they provide to cooperators.

That accountability necessitates the ability to demonstrate and certify the conservation planning technical proficiency of CD technical staff, and ensure that the practices implemented meet NRCS Standards through granting of Job Approval Authority (JAA). Additionally, we need a system by which we are able to track that JAA and Planning Certification, as well as the education, training, and experience that informs that proficiency.

NRCS has such a system in place, and in the past they have provided extensive training and oversight to District employees. This has helped ensure the integrity of the planning process and quality of the plans produced. However, for budgetary and legal reasons, NRCS can no longer provide the training that is needed, certify proficiency of conservation district staff, or grant NRCS Job Approval Authority.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to construct a system by which to certify technical staff, grant JAA, and provide appropriate training. This system should also have built-in quality control and capacity building features.

This system should be developed parallel to the NRCS JAA system and be substantial, meaningful, and defensible. Additionally, it should be developed with an eye to producing a product that is meaningful enough that NRCS will be able to have confidence in the proficiency certifications and approval authorities.

Recommendation:

WACD, WADE and the Conservation Commission will support the work of the Conservation Planning & District Technical Employees Development Work Group to develop a District Technical Staff proficiency inventory and training system along with a database to track staff development.

Presented by: Thurston Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-05

Title: WACD Request NACD Opposition to Clean Water Restoration Act

Problem:

The Clean Water Restoration Act (S. 787) is before Congress and would provide the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers the authority to regulate discharges to our nation's rivers and lakes, as well as any other significant 'navigable' water bodies. This legislation would expand the authority of the federal government to encompass all wetlands, intermittent streams, wet meadows, ephemeral lakes and ponds, stock ponds, groundwater, ditches, treatment ponds, and other places water may flow or stand, regardless of size. In essence, S 787 would give the federal government the ability to usurp state and local authority over their water.

Recommendation:

WACD shall encourage NACD to oppose the passage of the Clean Water Restoration Act (S. 787) or any other legislation that grants the federal government greater control of state waters.

Presented by: Okanogan Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-07

Title: Supervisor Training Requirements

Problem:

To remain in “good standing” as defined by the WSCC, supervisors are required to attend training sessions.

Recommendation:

WACD will work to provide training at the annual meetings. Topics could include, but are not limited to RCW 89.08, personnel management, elections, grant administration, capacity building and sexual harassment.

Presented by: Grant County Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-10

Title: Area Public Works Roster

Problem:

The bidding process for public works projects undertaken by conservation districts is time consuming, expensive and difficult. In some cases, especially with the engineering clusters, districts may not be complying with State law if they haven't done a "Request for Qualifications" and established a roster of qualified engineering firms to send RFP's for specific projects. That process is very time consuming and includes interviews with each engineering firm.

Recommendation:

That WACD in consultation with WSCC and the Municipal Research Service Center, and the State Auditor, assist the districts in each of the six areas to develop area-wide rosters of small works contractors, including engineers that are competent and qualified to perform on public works projects.

Presented by: Spokane County Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-12

Title: DOE Allow Local Building Standards for Cost-shared Building Projects

Problem:

Washington Department of Ecology funds best management practice projects intended to improve water quality. These projects often involve construction of covered manure storage structures, gutters and downspouts, concrete slabs, curbs and other structural construction projects. Currently, Washington Department of Ecology grants require that structural projects be built to Natural Resource Conservation Service specifications. Those specifications are federal standards and are often higher standards than required by local and state building codes. Meeting NRCS standards often raises the land occupiers' share of the cost of the practice beyond their means. Ultimately, this puts less conservation on the ground. In many cases, a suitable structure to accomplish the purpose and goals of the practice could be built to local standards for much lower costs.

Recommendation:

WACD and the Conservation Commission work with the Department of Ecology to allow Best Management Practice structures that meet local building standards and/or are designed by local engineering firms to local standards. This change in grant policy would allow conservation districts to cost share more projects at less cost, thereby allowing them to put more "conservation on the ground" and thus better achieve our mission of conserving natural resources.

Presented by: Thurston Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-13

Title: Researching Changes to the State Public Records Act

Problem:

Public records requests can cost conservation districts a lot of money to gather the information to properly respond. Most State agencies have departments and budgets that handle such requests. Being primarily grant driven, districts find themselves spending valuable funds needed for administration, rent, programs or staff.

Districts are often caught in the middle between the State Public Records Act and the Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) due to partnerships and programs working with NRCS or FSA. Districts are mandated to provide information that would not necessarily be discloseable under the FOIA even though districts work under the standards and specifications of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide.

It does not serve the public when conservation districts are unable to provide clear answers to questions about disclosure because the two laws are in conflict with each other.

Recommendation:

WACD should work with the Commission to research options or changes that can incorporate conservation districts into the FOIA process (or some state format) that more closely reflects their working relationship with our federal partners.

Presented by: Snohomish Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-14

Title: Amending Chapter 90.80 RCW (Water Conservancy Boards)

Problem:

The Washington State Department of Ecology is proposing to amend Chapter 90.80 RCW (Water Conservancy Boards). We believe the current law is sufficient and that the proposed changes would increase the bureaucratic requirements and place undue burden on both Conservancy Boards as well as water right change applicants.

Recommendation:

WACD oppose any amendment of Chapter 90.80 RCW as relates to water conservancy boards this legislative session.

Presented by: Benton Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-16

Title: Requiring SEPA Review for Water Rights Transfer at the Point of Transfer

Problem:

Current Washington State laws and rules require a single public comment period and notification for water rights transfers. Most water rights transfers originate and end in the same jurisdiction. However, a growing number of water right transfers are being proposed that move water from its current permitted point of withdrawal to a new point of withdrawal in another jurisdiction. When these multi-jurisdiction transfers are proposed the public comment period notification can be done in either the originating or receiving jurisdiction.

The impact to the communities, irrigation systems, and local economies at the point of original point of withdrawal are not being adequately addressed in all cases.

Recommendation:

WACD shall work with the Washington State Legislature and Department of Ecology to change current law and rule to require public comment period notification in the jurisdiction at the point of origin for the transfer of a water right.

Presented by: Okanogan Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-17

Title: Explore a Pilot Project for Conservation District Management of a Public Lands Parcel

Problem:

Several of our Washington Conservation Districts have large amounts of public lands within their district boundaries in need of conservation planning, practice implementation, and management. These state and federal agencies currently do not have an adequate workforce to accomplish these actions, but may have funding for management of the lands.

Recommendation:

WACD and WSCC would assist a conservation district with the development of a project and appropriate interagency agreement for conservation district management of a parcel of public lands to demonstrate effectiveness, efficiency, and management of conservation work that could be achieved. A pilot project in Trinity County California has proved to be a showcase example of how the natural resource conservation management provided by the local conservation district has yielded benefits for the community, Bureau of Land Management, and the conservation district.

The project would be authorized through existing statute, RCW 89.08.220 Paragraph (8) "To administer any project or program concerned with the conservation of renewable natural resources located within its boundaries undertaken by any federal, state, or other public agency by entering into a contract or other appropriate administrative arrangement with any agency" administering such project or program.

Presented by: Foster Creek Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-18

Title: Recognition of Hydropower as a Renewable Resource in Washington State

Problem:

When Initiative 937 was passed in 2006, it required electric utilities with 25,000 or more customers to meet targets for the use of renewable energy and energy conservation. The initiative did not include hydropower, which makes up nearly 75 percent of energy generated in the state. Wind, solar, biomass or tidal power were included as renewable resources. Wind turbines, however, do not generate power on the hottest or coldest days, when no wind generally blows. Wind turbines only work about 25% of the time, according to Franklin County PUD. The other sources are still in the development stage.

Chelan, Douglas and Grant PUDs have invested hundreds of millions to improve fish passage on the upper Columbia. The results of these efforts have been higher returns than before the dams were built only to be penalized for their efforts.

Investing in hydropower would reduce the cost of wind power by involving a second renewable resource. The use of hydropower and dams is vital to the economy of many Eastern Washington agricultural communities. Forty-nine other states recognize hydropower as a renewable resource.

In addition to providing clean, affordable, domestic electricity, hydropower also helps foster the growth of other renewable energy resources. By providing load firming and energy storage, hydropower helps maximize the benefits of solar and wind resources, too.

Recommendation:

WACD should support the Washington State legislature's amendment to Initiative 937 to include hydropower as a renewable resource in Washington State.

Presented by: South Douglas Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts
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Resolution 09-19

Title: Salmon Recovery Funding Board Policy Revisions

Problem:

Certain policies, procedures and working definitions used by the Salmon Recovery Funding Board in its grant programs impose an unnecessary administrative burden in the implementation and documentation of grant activities. These rigid guidelines force project sponsors to spend unproductive resources to manage project expenses and matching funds to meet arbitrary categories and percentages in the reimbursement structure. The current practice serves no practical benefit to the delivery of effective projects and does not represent true project costs.

Examples of these limitations include the allowable limits for reimbursement categories as well as the definitions of items in these categories. Typical contracts for restoration include categories for both construction and administration. However, the definition of construction costs does not include the engineering or project designs required to plan and construct the project, nor does it include contracting for or ordering equipment, supplies or contractors. Construction also does not include the field staff time necessary to direct and oversee the actual work. Both of these categories of expenses are necessary to the successful completion of the project, as well as a legal responsibility of a public entity that sponsors a project.

Some of these limitations are the result of a complex software program utilized by the agency to manage the grants. The software's programming includes some calculations that are in direct conflict with the published policy of the agency. For example, although the allowable maximum administration costs are 30% of the total contract, they are actually calculated as a percentage of construction costs – resulting in a lower actual allowable amount. Further, in the very competitive application and negotiation process for these grants, sponsors are often required to negotiate a much lower percentage of allowable administration expenses. Due to the calculation restrictions, reporting the actual value of these costs, even if reimbursement is not requested, will effectively reduce the amount of reimbursement allowed for actual cash expenditures.

Recommendation:

The WSCC and WACD should work with the Recreation and Conservation Office, Salmon Recovery Funding Board, Governor's Office and legislators to examine and revise the policies related to administration and construction costs, and, if necessary, update the software program to accommodate the appropriate calculations. These changes will allow sponsors to accurately reflect the true cost of salmon recovery work, as well as to improve the effectiveness of the projects and reduce overhead and administrative costs.

Presented by: Cascadia Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-21

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Title: Sales Tax Exemption

Problem:

The adoption of direct-seed systems on farms in the Palouse still remains far behind what it should be, with serious soil erosion problems and associated water quality problems continuing. One of the incentives that was put in place by the state legislature in 2000 and revised in 2005 has been recommended to sunset in January of 2011. That sales and use tax exemption could be a significant factor in making the purchase of a no-till drill more attractive to producers.

Background:

In 2000, the Washington State legislature provided three tax incentives intended to encourage reduction of field burning and improve air quality:

- 1) Retail sales and use tax exemptions for equipment used to dispose of straw and straw-based products in an alternative manner to burning and for certain retail services such as installing, constructing, repairing, cleaning, decorating, altering or improving eligible structures or machinery and equipment;
- 2) A credit against state B&O tax for up to half of the cost of building structures or acquiring equipment eligible for the exemption. The credit was intended for businesses that remove and process stubble for the farmer and was repealed in 2005; and
- 3) A property tax exemption for personal property eligible for the sales and use tax exemption, also repealed in 2005

The statute became effective on March 22, 2000 and expired on January 1, 2006. During the implementation of the exemption, Department of Revenue staff conducting audits in agricultural areas observed a high level of implement dealers allowing the exemption for unqualified equipment.

The legislature replaced those sales and use tax exemptions in 2005 before they expired. The statutory language for the new exemptions made it more difficult to qualify by specifying the types of qualifying equipment and by limiting eligibility to certain farmers and to certain counties. Those exemptions currently expire on January 1, 2011.

The list of exemption eligible equipment included:

- Bale Handles
- Power Rakes
- Shredders
- Plows
- Movers
- Sprayers
- Tractors of 250 hp
- Baler
- Chaff Spreaders
- Cultivators
- Harrows
- No-till Drill
- Strippers
- Swathers
- Transplants
- Chisels
- Straw Choppers
- Discs
- Minimum-till Drills



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Recommendations:

That WACD and the WSCC work with the state Legislature to draft and support a bill that would provide sales and use tax exemptions for the purchase of no-till drills and other equipment that could be utilized in the implementation of a direct-seed farming system and mulch till systems. The equipment that would be eligible:

- No-till drills
- Heavy harrows
- Combine straw choppers and chaff spreaders
- Sprayers
- Tractors over 250hp
- Mowers and shredders
- Swathers, balers and bale handling equipment
- Precision agricultural technology

Presented by: Spokane County Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts
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Resolution 09-22

Title: Agricultural Burn Fees

Problem:

When the agricultural burning legislation was passed by the state legislature in 1991, the maximum fee that could be charged was that it could not exceed \$2.50 per acre. The fee is set by the Ag Burn task force of which WACD is a member. The department of Ecology is promoting legislation that would raise the cap per acre fee to \$6.00 and increase the fee for pile burning to no more than one dollar per ton of material burned.

The program has evolved considerably since 1991. It is working well with fewer complaints from urban neighbors and farmers have been able to burn what they need to but the program income has not kept up with costs. But, those urban neighbors must also be responsible for bearing some of the costs.

Recommendation:

WACD will accept the fee increase to a cap of \$6 per acre and \$1 per ton of material burned with the following:

- 1) The Ag Burn Task Force keeps control of setting the fees for burning, and
- 2) The fees are split equitably between Ecology and permitting agencies (Mostly CD's).

Presented by: Palouse Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts
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Resolution 09-23

Title: Uniform and Equitable Landowner Labor Rates

Problem:

There is an inconsistency in allowable maximum labor rates that have been established by the various funding sources for landowners who choose to do their own work on their cost-share projects. WSCC allows \$18.00/hour, WSDOE \$16.00/hour, and BPA and SRFB have thus far allowed the rate that has been established by the ACCD Board of Supervisors of \$20.00/hour, a rate which was established based on what the FSA County Committee allowed and what was believed to be fair. This puts the district in an awkward position. Needless to say, any landowner would prefer their project to be funded from BPA or SRFB funds if it qualified in order to receive the higher rate.

In addition, the maximum rate that a landowner is able to charge is considerably less than what a licensed contractor is allowed to charge by the funding sources. Yet many of the landowners as farmers and ranchers actually do certain tasks, such as building fence, etc. as a profession even though they are not licensed contractors. While it is understandable for a licensed contractor to charge more due to overhead, all landowners should be assured that their per hour reimbursement rate will not only be fair, but consistent regardless of the funding source. To do it any other way is simply not equitable.

Recommendation:

WACD take the lead to work with the various funding agencies including WSCC and WSDOE to establish a fair and uniform per hour labor rate for landowners who do their own work on their cost-share projects OR agree to allow each individual district to adopt its own reasonable rates for its specific area.

Presented by: Asotin County Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts
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Resolution 09-24

Title: Federal Clean Water Act Navigable Waters

Problem:

Current congressional legislative proposals seek to remove the requirement that waters subject to federal regulation under the Clean Water Act be navigable or connected to navigable waters. This could curtail economic activity and extend the federal regulatory authority to all water including farm ponds and roadside ditches.

Recommendation:

WACD oppose the amendments to the Clean Water Act that would remove the requirement that a water body must be navigable or connected to navigable waters in order to fall under federal regulation.

Presented by: Benton Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts
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Resolution 09-25

Title: Permitting for Renewable Energy Components as Part of Conservation Practices

Problem:

Current Washington State rule gives Labor and Industries electrical inspectors authority to not permit installation of electrical components that do not have an National Electric Code recognized testing lab certification such as UL (Underwriters Laboratories). Many direct current (DC) pumps and controllers do not have UL listing because of the considerable expense and the fact that this listing has generally not been required in other states.

Conservation practices such as solar stock water pumps, temporary irrigation systems to establish tree and shrub plantings, and other water pumping systems are cost prohibitive because of the requirement to seek component evaluation by a Washington State Department of Labor and Industries approved electrical engineer in every installation.

These components have been installed around the United States and abroad without issues and have been operating safely for many years.

Recommendation:

WACD shall work with the Washington Department of Labor and Industries to adopt a policy approving non-listed DC pumps and their controllers and wind generators that are installed according applicable NEC and Washington State electrical code.

Presented by: Okanogan Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts
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Resolution 09-26

Title: Establishment of Accurate NRCS Conservation Practice Cost Rates

Problem:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) cost rates for cost sharing on conservation practices are based on statewide averages. However, costs vary significantly throughout the state. Unit costs also vary depending on the scale of a project. In the more remote areas of the state, particularly in western Washington where projects tend to also be relatively small, it is not unusual for conservation practice implementation costs to be more than double the NRCS cost rates. This is true even when competitive bids are solicited.

These unrealistic cost rates have a direct impact on NRCS program enrollees and may discourage producers in some areas of the state from applying to these programs. Furthermore, if utilized by conservation districts to estimate conservation practice costs, the NRCS cost rates can result in similar problems for conservation district cost-share applicants and programs.

Recommendation:

WACD should work with local conservation districts and the NRCS to establish more accurate NRCS cost rates for implementation of conservation practices. These cost rates should be established according to the true costs at the regional or conservation district level.

Presented by: Clallam Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts
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Resolution 09-27

Title: Revisions to NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program Evaluation Criteria

Problem:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRLPP), a program designed to purchase development rights on farmland so it will remain in agriculture. Landowners submit applications to state, tribal or local government or non-governmental organizations with a farm or ranch land protection program. The NRCS State Conservationist awards funds for up to 50 percent of the appraised fair market value of the conservation easement. The State Conservationist relies on advice from the State Technical Committee in making award decisions. To qualify, applications must include the following:

- Contain prime, unique, or other productive soil or historical or archaeological resources;
- Be included in a pending offer from a state, tribal, or local government or non-governmental organization's farmland protection program;
- Be privately owned;
- Be covered by a conservation plan for any highly erodible land;
- Be large enough to sustain agricultural production;
- Be accessible to markets for what the land produces; and
- Be surrounded by parcels of land that can support long-term agricultural production.

In addition, US Census Bureau population change data, Census of Agriculture farm data, and total county acreage and farmland acreage data are utilized in the application review process. The importance of farm operation size is locality specific. Currently, population change criteria are evaluated on a county level; however, farmland may be under threat from population increases in one part of a county while population decreases are occurring in other, non-agricultural areas of the county. When evaluating the percentage of county land in agriculture, factors such as public lands which may not be farmable are not considered. Furthermore, certain areas of the country that are particularly suited to the production of certain crops, such as vegetable seed, may be critical farmlands where farm acreage size is not as critical a factor as in other areas. In some counties, these factors may result in the undervaluing of critically important farmland that is under serious threat of conversion, thus leading FRLPP application reviewers to not fund the purchase of development rights.

Recommendation:

WACD should work with the Washington State Office of Farmland Preservation and the Washington State office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, as well as the National Association of Conservation Districts and NRCS at the national level to develop or modify Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program application evaluation criteria that take into account local conditions and local farmland conversion threats.

Presented by: Clallam Conservation District
RESOLUTION PASSED.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts
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Resolution 09-28

Title: Beaver be Gone

Problem:

CREP projects are demonstrating that if you build the habitat, the wildlife will come. In particular, beaver are finding these projects most hospitable and are doing their best to improve in-stream flows. Unfortunately, they are insensitive and do not obtain permission before flooding out the neighbors. Additionally, they do not practice family planning. Females give birth from two to eight young in the spring who are forced out to fend for themselves after two years.

Current CREP contracts provide for only five years of maintenance. Beaver can invade a project after that time. Without any natural predators their populations will soon be able to overwhelm district elections and install their own single issue board members to the detriment of our community. Districts will fall into disrepute. Landowners will shun participation in CREP which will result in fewer habitats for other fish and wildlife.

Recommendation:

The State must recognize its responsibility to manage beaver through the life of CREP contracts where flooding is a likely, potential problem. Accordingly, the following practices will be eligible for reimbursement from the WSCC:

1. Trapping,
2. Beaver dam removal.
3. Beaver deceiver installation and maintenance.
4. Annual inspection for beaver presence.

WACD will work with WSCC to adopt policy that gives districts the resources necessary to ensure that beaver activity will not negatively impact adjoining landowners or drainage systems upon which farmers rely to keep their land productive.

Presented by: Whatcom Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



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Resolution 09-29

Title: Improve Criteria for Cooperator Participation in Conservation Stewardship Program

Problem:

The 2008 Farm Bill revised the Conservation Securities Program into the Conservation Stewardship Program. With those revisions, criteria changed that are drastically lowering the cooperator participation in the program due to overly stringent requirements.

Recommendation:

WACD will work with NACD and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop reasonable CSP criteria for specifically non-direct seeding farmers; with a goal of increasing cooperator participation in the program.

Presented by: Foster Creek Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts
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Resolution 09-31

Title: Direct Seed Interpretations

Problem:

The criteria for Direct Seed for USDA programs is not well understood by growers. This is due in part to values in evaluating tools such as RUSLE. The common feeling being expressed by growers is that the NRCS Tech Guide requirements are difficult to meet. Growers are not clear about the equipment options. The result is that growers are discouraged from applying for Direct Seed under USDA programs.

Recommendation:

WACD establish a working committee to address Direct Seed from a grower's perspective. This committee would consist of: district supervisors, district employees and grower groups. This group would then work with NRCS at the state and national level to address the changes needed to make Direct Seed a more successful program practice. The committee would be established by Jan 1, 2010.

Presented by: Palouse-Rock Lake Conservation District

RESOLUTION PASSED.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts
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Resolution 09-33

Title: Air Quality

Problem:

Uneconomical air quality restriction on agriculture.

Recommendation:

WACD opposes any further proposed EPA and/or Washington Department of Ecology air quality restrictions that reduce particle size and micron limitations to air quality that results in a net economic loss to the Washington agricultural industry.

RESOLUTION PASSED.