



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

2016 WACD Annual Meeting Final Resolutions

November 30, 2016



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

2016 WACD Annual Meeting Resolutions – FINAL

Resolution	Title	Author/District	Committee Passed
2016-05	Restore WSCC Capacity Building grants.	Clark CD	District Operations & Education Committee
2016-07	Public Disclosure Request Reform	San Juan Islands CD	Legislative Committee
2016-08	Associate Supervisor Cost Share Authorization	Grays Harbor CD	Legislative Committee
2016-09	Dropping population criteria under RCW 89.08405(3)(a)	Thurston CD	Legislative Committee
2016-10	Joint Chiefs Funding, Cultural Resource System Enhancement	Stevens CD	Legislative Committee
2016-12	Action to keep Continuous CRP acres separate from the General CRP cap	Foster Creek CD	Natural Resources Policy Committee
2016-14	Utilize Washington conservation district resources to assist with livestock and wildlife conflicts.	Okanogan CD	Natural Resources Policy Committee
2016-15	Aging wheat varieties are not keeping up with current quality or quantity problems	South Douglas CD	Natural Resources Policy Committee
2016-16	Approaches to fuel load reductions on SAFE acres	Foster Creek CD	Natural Resources Policy Committee
2016-18	Without a conservation plan or measure in place, a potential resource concern exists as CRP contracts expire and land is converted back to production agriculture	Spokane CD	Natural Resources Policy Committee



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Resolution No. 2016-05

Title: Restore WSCC Capacity Building grants.

Problem: Grants provide for specific projects or practices with very little to no funding for District operations and activities outside the grant tasks. Districts are unable to build their capacity to meet locally identified goals that are outside specific funding eligibility. This also limits the District's ability to outreach, receive training, purchase needed equipment, and improve capabilities to achieve natural resource protection, enhancement, and restoration.

Years ago the Conservation Commission recognized this problem and offered funding to be used to support the critical infrastructure needs of conservation districts. Capacity Building Grants were made available to conservation districts that demonstrated financial need as well as the ability to use the funding for capacity building within their district or in combination with another district. Some of the actions that could be funded included:

- Implementing long term funding
- Annual and/or long range planning
- Locally led planning participation
- Supervisor/Associate Supervisor training
- District Employee capacity building training for outreach, communications, planning, program development, administrative, management, and/or personnel needs
- Development of a strategic plan for funding
- Conducting stakeholder and partnership meetings
- Communications development and enhancement
- Start-up funds for a new program
- Identification and application for new sources of grant funding

Recommendation: WACD encourage and support WSCC in seeking to increase funding Capacity Building grants to Conservation Districts.

Presented by: Clark Conservation District

Approved by the Southwest Area Association on 10/11/16

Amended and passed by District Operations and Education Committee on 11/29/16

Passed by General Assembly on 11/30/16



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Resolution No. 2016-07

Title: Public Disclosure Request Reform

Problem: San Juan Islands Conservation District is the recipient of numerous broad public records requests that are requiring extensive resources to respond to. This is a huge and unprecedented burden for a Washington State Conservation District.

Government employees are not allowed under current law to charge for their time to search for, compile, and redact records. Last year, in the State of Washington, tax payers footed the bill for over \$60 million in costs to fulfill requests, while requestors paid less than 1 percent. In addition, requestors are not required to narrow requests for an identified purpose. They can currently request all records for undisclosed purposes.

See http://www.sao.wa.gov/state/Pages/PA_RecordsStudy.aspx for the State Auditor's Office Performance Audit: *The Effect of Public Records Requests on State and Local Governments* for additional discussion.

Recommendation: WACD to work with conservation districts, Washington State Conservation Commission, and the state legislature to improve the Public Records legislation to considering recommendations made by the State Auditor's Office, including but not limited to:

- Differentiating requesters and requests by their purpose
- Recovering costs associated with disclosing records: material and personnel time
- Developing a statewide alternative dispute resolution program
- Addressing complexities in public records laws

See http://www.sao.wa.gov/state/Documents/PA_Public_Records_Requests_ar1017396.pdf for full report from the State Auditor's Office.

Presented by: San Juan Islands Conservation District

Approved by the Northwest Area Association on 10/11/16
Amended and passed by Legislative Committee on 11/29/16
Passed by General Assembly on 11/30/16



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Resolution No. 2016-08

Title: Associate Supervisor Cost Share Authorization

Problem: Current law has restrictions that disallow CD Associate Supervisors from receiving cost share which is a permitted action for Supervisors. This is limiting the opportunity for recruiting Associate Supervisors who benefit the district in many ways not least of which is creating knowledgeable and committed candidates for roles as Supervisors. There needs to be a change in the law to assure that Associate Supervisors can participate in all programs of the districts that are made available to Supervisors.

Recommendation: WACD should support legislative action to allow all benefits of District Programs available to Supervisors be available to Associate Supervisors.

Presented by: Grays Harbor Conservation District

Approved by the Southwest Area Association on 10/11/16
Amended and passed by Legislative Committee on 11/29/16
Passed by General Assembly on 11/30/16



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Resolution No. 2016-09

Title: Dropping population criteria under RCW 89.08405(3)(a)

Problem: The Rates and Charges System currently caps the maximum annual per parcel rate at \$5; with exception of those counties with a population of over 480,000, which are capped at \$10; and counties with a population of over 1.5 million, which are capped at \$15. This puts districts that fall a lower population bracket at a disadvantage, limiting their capabilities.

Recommendation: WACD to work with conservation districts, Washington State Conservation Commission, others, and the legislature to make changes to Chapter 89.08 RCW to drop the population criteria in section 405(3)(a) to allow districts to have the option of a rate of up to \$15 to be pursued after the 2017 legislative session.

Presented by: Thurston Conservation District

Approved by the Southwest Area Association on 10/11/16
Amended and passed by Legislative Committee on 11/29/16
Passed by General Assembly on 11/30/16



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Resolution No. 2016-10

Title: Joint Chiefs Funding, Cultural Resource System Enhancement

Problem: Many landowners in Eastern Washington face serious forest health issues. Tree overcrowding, species composition, disease and insect outbreaks are factors leading to critical health and wildfire issues.

Wild Fires of 2014 and 2015 have demonstrated the urgency for these lands to be treated. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has specific funding through the Joint Chiefs program and Wildfire Recovery program.

Delays in Cultural Resource reviews and approval discourage landowners from participating in programs. These delays are also placing the property and landowners at higher risk of wildfire and property losses.

Expediting cultural resource reviews on specific, fuels reduction projects, such as the Joint Chiefs Program are necessary for addressing environmental natural resource problems on our forests lands. Improving the timeliness of Cultural Resource approvals will improve forest health, maintain a viable timber industry, reduce the risk of catastrophic wild fires and strengthen our local rural economies. An unhealthy forest means an unhealthy community.

Recommendation: WACD appreciates the seriousness of landowner's forest health issues and encourages NRCS to expedite cultural resource reviews on critical fuels reduction, practices and contracts affecting forest health:

- Recommend prioritize cultural resource reviews of projects with extraordinary fire danger and/or drought
- Develop a timeline to respond to probability of cultural resource activity (high, medium, low)
- Develop a system to notify all entities involved in the Cultural Resource process at the same time. (similar to the water quality permit JARPA application)

Presented by: Stevens County Conservation District

Approved by the Northeast Area Association on 10/25/16
Amended and passed by Legislative Committee on 11/29/16
Passed by General Assembly on 11/30/16



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Resolution No. 2016-12

Title: Action to keep Continuous CRP acres separate from the General CRP cap.

Problem: Under current Farm Bill Legislation, Continuous CRP land, such as SAFE acres, does not count towards the 25% cap imposed for General CRP lands. Continuous CRP lands provide valuable ecological benefits across the landscape through practices including riparian buffers, wildlife habitat buffers, wetland buffers, filter strips, wetland restoration, grass waterways, shelterbelts, windbreaks, living snow fences, contour grass strips, salt tolerant vegetation, and shallow water areas for wildlife. If the 2018 Farm Bill does not contain language to count Continuous CRP and General CRP separately, then many ecosystem services provided by the above mentioned practices would be lost due to a decrease in total acreage allowed to be enrolled in CRP.

Recommendation: WACD and NACD should ask the Agriculture Committees of Congress to keep language in the 2018 Farm Bill allowing Continuous CRP and SAFE acres to be counted separate from the General CRP cap.

Presented by: Foster Creek Conservation District

Approved by the Northcentral Area Association on 10/18/16

Amended and passed by Natural Resources Committee on 11/29/16

Passed by General Assembly on 11/30/16



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Resolution No. 2016-14

Title: Utilize Washington conservation district resources to assist with livestock and wildlife conflicts.

Problem: The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife convened a Wolf Advisory Group in 2013 which is comprised of a variety of stakeholders from around Washington State. The purpose of the group is to provide a proper place for discussion and dialogue about wolf populations in Washington State and often about conflicts between wolves and livestock and domestic animals.

Many livestock producers have been offered various levels of assistance by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to create deterrents to negative wildlife and livestock interactions. Some of these offers have been met with cautioned acceptance, some outright rebuked, and others with no response at all. Some ranchers have expressed deep concerns about the effectiveness of such deterrents and other actions proposed by department staff.

Conservation Districts have traditionally had roles in the introduction of new conservation principles and ideas into communities. Furthermore, districts have a favorable rapport with landowners for being non-regulatory and solution-oriented. Districts are uniquely positioned to providing technical and in some cases financial assistance to landowners for the implementation of priority conservation practices that benefit natural resources.

Recommendation: WACD shall work with interested conservation districts to engage the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to incorporate willing districts as a tool to assisting ranchers and landowners with implementing practices to reduce wildlife and livestock/crops conflicts through voluntary, incentive-based practices.

Presented by: Okanogan Conservation District

Approved by the Northcentral Area Association on 10/18/16
Amended and passed by Natural Resources Committee on 11/29/16
Passed by General Assembly on 11/30/16



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Resolution No. 2016-15

Title: Aging wheat varieties are not keeping up with current quality or quantity problems

Problem: Many wheat varieties grown in North Central Washington have been planted for many years. These older varieties cannot adapt to current environmental changes, pests, and diseases. Lower quality means lower return to the agricultural community.

Recommendation: WACD should support research to replace the older varieties with new cultivars that are adaptable to the current environmental challenges in unique, geographical areas of Washington State.

Presented by: South Douglas Conservation District

Approved by the Northcentral Area Association on 10/18/16

Amended and passed by Natural Resources Committee on 11/29/16

Passed by General Assembly on 11/30/16



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Resolution No. 2016-16

Title: Approaches to fuel load reductions on SAFE acres.

Problem: Current regulations surrounding the use of SAFE (Conservation Reserve Program State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement) land are variable concerning the required management practices. FSA created SAFE to benefit high priority state wildlife conservation objectives through the restoration of vital habitat.

Through SAFE, “producers create habitat that is beneficial to the target high-priority wildlife species. This may involve planting trees, grasses, forbs or other species that help restore or improve wildlife habitat. Specific SAFE conservation practices are set forth in each state’s SAFE project.” Management requirements are tailored to the individual practice. Similarly, the goal of the Washington Sage Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) is to benefit native prairie grouse and other shrub-steppe wildlife species that have declined because of ongoing habitat loss and fragmentation throughout the West.

One of the most significant threats to healthy habitat is wildfire. There needs to be a provision in the SAFE program to allow for the reduction of fuel loads to maintain healthy habitats either through regulated use of:

- Grazing control
- Controlled burning
- Mechanical control

Farmers and ranchers have the first-hand knowledge and experience to help address the needs of high-priority species. SAFE was developed to help farmers and ranchers develop and maintain high-value wildlife habitats, and proposals were judged on whether the selected practices would create the desired habitat.

Recommendation: WACD and NACD will work to encourage the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to provide for fuels load reductions on SAFE acres.

Presented by: Foster Creek Conservation District

Approved by the Northcentral Area Association on 10/18/16
Amended and passed by Natural Resources Committee on 11/29/16
Passed by General Assembly on 11/30/16



WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Resolution No. 2016-18

Title: Without a conservation plan or measure in place, a potential resource concern exists as CRP contracts expire and land is converted back to production agriculture

Problem: The year immediately following CRP contract expiration should be considered a resource concern due to the potential for heavy tillage practices. Producers need NRCS and FSA to recognize the transition from Conservation Reserve Program land to continuous cropping as a resource concern so that producers will be eligible for cost-share using conservation practices in the take-out year under existing EQIP and CSP programs.

Background: Producers bringing land back into continuous crop production after the land has been in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) cannot qualify for conservation programs because it is not recognized as a resource concern. This is due in part to the fact that CRP land is one of the most highly protective conservation systems available to producers. Currently, any farming practice implemented on the land after CRP is perceived as being less protective to the environment.

This situation has created an incentive for landowners or tenants to perform heavy tillage operations on this land during the first cropping cycle in an effort to qualify for conservation programs in the second cropping cycle. This heavy tillage would create an immediate resource concern in that it can be mitigated by moving that producer to a direct seed or no-till system under the 345 Reduced Tillage or 329 Direct Seed Standards that can preserve the benefits of the CRP land.

Recommendation: WACD requests a new process by which landowners will be asked to engage conservation district and NRCS planners in developing a transition plan when bringing CRP back into crop production. (Perhaps this could be part of the CRP contract in the first place for new contracts.) WACD further requests that NRCS and FSA, at the national and state levels, recognize the transition from CRP acreage to crop production as a resource concern enabling producers to qualify for conservation programs beginning in the first year of production.

Presented by: Spokane Conservation District

Approved by the Northeast Area Association on 10/25/16

Amended and passed by Natural Resources Committee on 11/29/16

Passed by General Assembly on 11/30/16