

Washington Association of Conservation Districts

March 18, 2024
Work Session Minutes
Hybrid Meeting

Members Remotely Present

Mike Mumford, President (Pend Oreille CD)
Barbara Bailey, Secretary (Underwood CD)
Mark Craven, Treasurer (Snohomish CD)
Doug Rushton, National Director (Thurston CD)
Jeanette Dorner, Past President (Pierce CD)
Alan Chapman, Northwest Area Director (Whatcom CD)
David Vliet, Northwest Area Director (Kitsap CD)
Lisa Zaborac, Southwest Area Director (Grays Harbor CD)
John Preston, North Central Area Director (Columbia Basin CD)
Jack Clark, South Central Area Director (Benton CD)
Cindy Reed, South Central Area Director (North Yakima CD)
Jeff Schibel, Northeast Area Director (Lincoln County CD)
John W. Floyd, Northeast Area Director (Pend Oreille CD)
Cindy Pierce, WADE President (Skagit CD)

Others Remotely Present

Heather Wendt, WACD Director of Development & Engagement
Jim Brown, WACD Director of Nursery Operations
Shana Joy, SCC Southeast Regional Manager / Regional Manager Director
Elsa Bowen, Lincoln County CD District Manager
Dave Hedrick, Ferry Conservation District Manager
Brynn Brady, Ceiba Consulting, WACD Lobbyist

In Person

Tom Salzer, WACD Executive Director

President Mumford called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Heather conducted a roll call of those present. No one from the public wished to express a public comment.

Northeast Area Focus

Elsa Bowen, Lincoln County CD Manager, shared that the district is in the middle of its supervisor election. They are once again conducting a county-wide mail-in ballot campaign. Last year they had a 10% return and this year, with one week left, they are at 15.5%, which exceeds the county average. They were able to reduce the cost of the election this year from \$11,000 to \$8,000 by hiring a mail company to print and mail the ballots. On one side of the ballot, they added information on district programs. They also printed a one-page flyer and included it in the county-wide newspaper. The cost was divided between multiple grants making it

economically feasible. The district's cost-share list continues to grow. Insurance companies are putting pressure on landowners to have Firewise training to retain their homeowner's insurance, so the district is working on providing the necessary training.

Dave Hedrick, Ferry CD Manager, reported that their election is scheduled for the end of the month. In addition to the election, they are also busy preparing for their Conservation Fair and Plant Sale. Last year they had 150 people attend the event which also features informational booths hosted by partners. Dave reported that USDA released the 2022 Census of Agriculture data and compared to 2017 cattle inventory in Ferry County has decreased by 48%. Statewide net farm income increased by 40%. In 2017 Ferry County reported 30 young producers and in 2022 there were only 3. With only one commodity, cattle ranching, the County is more vulnerable to losing agricultural producers and income. The losses can be partially attributed to the pressure put on cattlemen by growing wolf populations. Ferry County will need to reassess its VSP plan and the associated monitoring plan.

John W. Floyd, Pend Oreille CD Supervisor, reported that he has two school site visits scheduled this week to promote the Envirothon.

2024 Legislative Session

Brynn Brady reported that this legislative session is a wrap, and we are now waiting for the Governor to sign bills and budgets. The Governor has until April 1st to sign those items and the budgets are typically the last thing to be signed.

There were lots of dollars committed during this short session from the Climate Commitment Act. New funding allocated this session came with a proviso that it cannot be spent until after the election in November when Washingtonians will vote on the initiative to repeal the Act. The big win for us this session was the \$3.5 million in CTA funding. There were very few agencies that received additional funding during this short session, with the Department of Health being an anomaly. Brynn reviewed the current status of known legislative retirements and those running for other positions. Overall, Brynn sees the challenge next session being the loss of stability that was provided by many of the legislators who are retiring.

February Financial Report

Mark Craven reviewed the WACD Financial Report with the board. Jim Brown noted that transfers from long-term investments were being shown as a cost to the PMC. Mark Craven indicated that he would work with Lori and Tom to clarify how the funds transfer should be coded to ensure that this is the most appropriate way to account for it since it seems somewhat counterintuitive.

Cash Flow Analysis

Tom Salzer reviewed the cash flow analysis prepared by Michael Wittenburg, WACD's CPA. The PMC's cash flow shows normal fluctuations; however, the Executive Office cash flow shows a downward trend. The concept of adding a third person is to diversify the potential income streams for the organization. President Mumford pointed out that we should look at the overall

financial health of the organization and not one division. In companies that have a production department and an executive department, it is the production side that creates revenue.

PMC Update

Jim Brown reported that sales are currently at \$1.579 million. They are still adding to the total, but most customers have completed ordering for the season. The PMC planted a whole section of Blue Elderberry today and field clean-up is almost complete. The team is excited to transition from harvest into a new growing season.

Update on DEI Workplan

Heather Wendt provided an update on work that has been done to date for year 2 of the DEI Action Plan. Item D calls for WACD to identify and secure funding opportunities for community engagement and education. Staff have submitted two grants to support this deliverable. Item E calls for WACD to establish relationships with organizations representing underserved communities so that offers of services and employment are more welcome when shared. Staff have written a letter of support to partner agencies seeking to create workforce development opportunities for historically underserved tribal members. Staff have also facilitated connections with partners who seek to provide training opportunities to CD staff to assist them with providing services to underserved communities. Item F calls for WACD to increase community involvement and inclusion in conservation district elections and work with the Conservation Commission and WACD Board of Directors to make recommendations for improvement. Staff have started reviewing election resources on the SCC website and will provide recommendations.

WACD Committee Updates

Livestock Committee

The Livestock Committee was made a standing committee in 2022. It was originally formed through Resolution 2021-05 to address livestock riparian water rights issues. Heather noted during the recent website updates that the group did not have a current mission statement. Alan Chapman, the Workgroup Chair, indicated that they needed to meet again and that he would bring that up with the committee.

Plant Materials Task Force

Heather Wendt reported that 42 CDs have responded to the Questionnaire. The Task Force will meet on March 25th to review the results of the survey.

Shared Resource Workgroup

The Workgroup is in the process of developing a white paper to address a phased approach to providing HR resources for CDs. The Workgroup will meet next on March 29th.

Sustainable Funding Workgroup

The Workgroup is currently developing a session design for the Spring Legislative Meeting. The Workgroup will meet next on March 25th.

Ag Loan Task Force

The Ag Loan Taskforce has been fully populated. We have a wonderful cross-section of districts who have expertise on the topic and members with a knowledge of agriculture and finance. Ryan Baye will be facilitating this Task Force and the first meeting should be scheduled soon.

Renewable Energy Workgroup

One committee spot is left, for the NW Area. We have offered that spot to San Juan Islands CD, and we will find out this month if the board is interested in participating. This Workgroup will be facilitated by Heather Wendt, and we plan to hold our first meeting in April.

Draft 2025 Work Plan Review

Tom Salzer and Heather Wendt reviewed the draft Annual Work Plan with the board. Board members and attendees provided the names of additional organizations that we can seek to partner with in FY 25. In addition, Doug Rushton noted that one of our challenges is creating a pipeline of supervisors who are interested in serving on the WACD board. President Mumford noted that we need to create resiliency and continuity in our operations staff. Heather will send the updated Word version out for review, and she asked board members to have their comments back to her by May 10th so the final plan can be ready for approval at our June meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.