

Washington Association of Conservation Districts
Remote Connection through Zoom
May 16, 2022
Board of Directors March Work Session Minutes

Members Remotely Present

Mike Mumford, President (Pend Oreille CD)
Barbara Bailey, Secretary (Underwood CD)
Dave Fenn, Treasurer (Lewis CD)
Doug Rushton, National Director (Thurston CD)
Jeanette Dorner, Past President (Pierce CD)
Alan Chapman, Northwest Area Director (Whatcom CD)
Chris Porter, Northwest Area Director (King CD)
Lisa Zaborac, Southwest Area Director (Grays Harbor CD)
John Preston, North Central Area Director (Grant County CD)
Mary Collins, Southeast Area Director (Palouse CD)
Annie Byerly, Southeast Area Director (Walla Walla County CD)
Bill Blake, WADE President (Skagit CD)

Others Remotely Present

Tom Salzer, WACD Executive Director
Jim Brown, WACD Director of Nursery Operations
Ryan Baye, WACD Director of Legislative and Membership Services
Roylene Comes at Night, NRCS State Conservationist
Stephanie Bishop, Program Manager (Thurston CD)
Kenna Fosnacht, Resource Technician (Lewis CD)
Mike Nordin, District Manager (Grays Harbor & Pacific CD)

President Mumford called the meeting to order at 6:01. Ryan Baye conducted a roll call of those present.

Area Focus

Stephanie Bishop spoke on behalf Thurston CD. She reported on a rising demand for district programs, cost-share, and plant sales. She spoke in-depth on a Chehalis basin restoration in the big project on the Skookumchuck. There was also a new Thurston CD podcast, "Conservation Starter" with Kianna Skinner had published 4 podcasts so far. Stephanie also shared details of a new regional grazing association pilot, the work of the local Veteran Conservation Crew, a record-breaking native plant sale, and Envirothon. She answered questions about their podcast and grazing association pilot project.

Kenna Fosnacht shared the success of VSP in Lewis County with 485 Individual Stewardship Plans, with the goal of eventually contacting all ag and forestry producers in the county. She also shared details of their WSDA partnership regarding the soil health program, the district giving away tree plugs, and the Stream Team for hands on stewardship. She answered questions about the district's largescale projects and the rising cost of restoration projects.

Mike Nordin shared his thoughts on the growing rural-urban divide in the community and the failings of certain federal agencies negatively impacting conservation efforts in the state. He appreciated the invitation for the area to speak directly to the Board and asked for the practice to continue. He expressed his frustrations from the last WACD Annual Business Meeting as a district staff participant about the lack of unity among CDs on the election resolution that surfaced during the legislative session and how district staff were asked to speak after supervisors during resolution discussions. He concluded with details of the two districts he managed, including the expanded services of the district, the new challenges from the invasive green crab, and their upcoming Marine Resource event. Lisa Zaborac added her thoughts about the “amazing staff and amazing projects” of Grays Harbor CD. He answered questions about the Marine Resources event and the effect of red tides along the coast.

Partner Reports

Bill Blake recognized the WADE staff working on the WADE Conference. They had 125 registered before last week and Bill was very comfortable WADE would have no trouble meeting its financial obligations. There was an upcoming WADE planning meeting, where the employee of the year award would be decided.

Roylene Comes at Night discussed the first year of new money for NRCS. There was a limited potential of even more, because of the increase in costs for restoration projects. Washington NRCS has many CSP forestry applications, the benefit of an aggressive statewide campaign. Her staff had identified nine different buckets of money available to the state, strategizing how to get that info out to districts and other partners. She ended with details on NRCS staff returning to the office.

Doug Rushton offered an overview of the Conservation Society and their examples of mini-grants available to districts. Doug continued with a NACD report on the upcoming events, including their summer business meeting in Puerto Rico and the Pacific Region meeting in Hawaii.

Committee Updates

Ryan Baye shared details of the first meeting of the Livestock Task Force, and their future agendas. He also shared information on the Sustainable Funding Committee trying to meet for the first time and get up to speed on past efforts on the topic.

Tom Salzer and Bill Blake provided an update on the Harmful Algae Bloom workgroup’s meeting the previous week. They included details on speakers/guests the work group invited in.

Meeting Format

Ryan Baye reminded the board of a request by Alan Chapman at the last meeting to discuss how the meeting minutes are organized. Alan shared his concern that some details from the last couple of meetings lacked some helpful details and context for those reading minutes, but recognized there’s a fine balance to accurately keeping meeting minutes. Barbara Bailey shared her viewpoint as WACD’s Secretary responsible for how minutes are documented. There were additional comments about the requirements for meeting minutes and how memories can be “less than stellar” among older members. Ryan ended the conversation with an explanation of his preferred minute format as well as a commitment to include additional details in the meeting minutes as appropriate, to provide context helpful for those not a part of the meetings.

Public Comment Policy

Tom Salzer updated the Board on the draft public comment policy, with a new draft policy included in the meeting materials. Doug Rushton wanted to standardize the time in the two comment periods offered to the general public early in the meeting and again before votes. Chris Porter agreed that fifteen minutes was likely too long for general public comments; he has only seen public comments offered once at King CD.

Annual Business Meeting Proceedings

Mike Mumford started the conversation with his reasons for asking this to be on the agenda, that there were gaps in WACD's governance that were exposed at last year's meeting. He had staff identified the areas that could be evaluated – the meeting agenda, the resolution process, resolutions from the floor, and speaking order. He answered questions about how these policies could be changed and what threshold resolutions from the floor would be required to meet in order to be considered. He expressed the view that the process should be designed to encourage resolutions come through the area meeting process so as to provide members the opportunity to study them in advance of the Annual Business Meeting.

Annual Work Plan

Josh Monaghan and Tom Salzer presented the Annual Work Plan in more detail than what was shared at the April Meeting. They answered questions about the purpose of the work plan and who it would be directing.

Preliminary Budget Decisions

Tom Salzer shared with the Board some of the preliminary budget decisions and assumptions to be made at the June Board meeting regarding the FY23 budget.

Resolutions

Ryan Baye provided additional details beyond the updates on current resolutions that was included in the meeting packet. He revealed some of his frustrations with the current process, that there were unreasonable expectations on what was asked in resolutions adopted by the membership without consideration of WACD's available resources and that all resolutions (despite their goals) were considered equally important. He admitted WACD staff hadn't consistently communicated the progress of addressing resolutions, with some portion of the membership likely in the dark on which resolutions were being prioritized. He wanted the Board to be aware that WACD had over 60 active resolutions, that many could not be accomplished (like those promoting changes to federal law) and staff was having to pick and choose which resolutions might be achievable.

Alan Chapman expressed the view that resolutions should be passed with some indication of resources or staff capacity. Doug Rushton felt it was hard to prioritize between the responsibilities of WACD that stemmed from resolutions and those not coming from resolutions. He also provided information on the resolutions he was responsible for that went to NACD.

Announcements

Ryan Baye provided details on the June in-person meeting at the Plant Materials Center. He informed the Board that Grant County CD was petitioning the Commission to change the district's name to Columbia Basin CD.

Meeting adjourned at 8:33.