



Washington State Conservation Commission

Policy #	12-16 Conservation District Consolidation
Applies to:	All Conservation District Supervisors (elected & appointed) and Staff.
Effective Date:	September 20, 2012 as approved by a vote of the Conservation Commission

Authority to Consolidate

RCW 89.08.180 contains three paragraphs pertaining to the combination or consolidation of two or more conservation districts, and gives the Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission) certain powers and duties:

- *“Upon petition of the boards of supervisors of two or more districts, the commission may approve the combining of all or parts of such districts and name the district, or districts, with the approval of the name by the secretary of state. A public hearing and/or a referendum may be held if deemed necessary or desirable by the commission in order to determine the wishes of the voters.”*
- *“When districts are combined, the joint boards of supervisors will first select a chairman, secretary and other necessary officers and select a regular date for meetings. All elected supervisors will continue to serve as members of the board until the expiration of their current term of office, and/or until the election date nearest their expiration date. All appointed supervisors will continue to serve until the expiration of their current term of office, at which time the commission will make the necessary appointments. In the event that more than two districts are combined, a similar procedure will be set up and administered by the commission.”*
- *“When districts are combined or territory is moved from one district to another, the property, records and accounts of the districts involved shall be distributed to the remaining district or districts as approved by the commission. A new certificate of organization, naming and describing the new district or districts, shall be issued by the secretary of state.”*

Required steps

The Commission will require the following information and actions before taking action to approve or deny a petition to combine or consolidate two or more conservation districts:

1. A petition must be provided to the Commission by the combining districts. RCW 89.08.180. The petition shall include:
 - a. A schedule for reducing the number of board members serving the consolidated conservation district to the required composition of three elected and two appointed conservation district supervisors. RCW 89.08.180.
 - i. The schedule must provide that the number of elected supervisors is always equal to, or greater than, the number of appointed supervisors; appointed supervisors may not outnumber elected supervisors.

- ii. Each supervisor will serve his or her full three-year term as specified in statute. Supervisors may voluntarily resign at any time. A vacancy created by such a resignation may or may not be filled depending on the schedule submitted in the petition.
- b. A description of the property, records, and accounts of each conservation district requesting to be combined. The description must be approved by each petitioning conservation district board of supervisors, and must be acceptable to the Commission for the consolidation petition to be approved. RCW 89.08.180. The petition must include:
 - i. Identification of all assets that will be transferred to the consolidated conservation district.
 - ii. Identification of which conservation district office will be the official office of the consolidated conservation district, and identify any planned reduction in the location and number of offices available to the public during the consolidation period. All official records of the consolidated district must be maintained at the official district office location.
 - iii. Identification of the location of all assets of the consolidated district, particularly if any asset is to be located at a place other than the official office.
 - iv. A description of the liabilities of each of the combining districts and the disposition of those liabilities following consolidation. Prior to the completion of the petition an audit of each of the consolidating districts may be conducted and the results of the audit shared with the districts.
- c. A plan to combine the authorized conservation programs of the petitioning conservation districts must accompany the petition, and must be approved by each petitioning conservation district board of supervisors.
- d. A listing of all memoranda of agreement or understanding that each district has with other entities (governmental or private) and a description of whether those memoranda need to be reviewed or modified to take into account the consolidation of the districts.
- e. A name for the proposed consolidated conservation district must accompany the petition, must be approved by each petitioning conservation district board of supervisors, and must be acceptable to the Washington State Conservation Commission for the consolidation petition to be approved. RCW 89.08.180.
- f. A description of how the consolidation of districts will address natural resource and landowner needs in the newly formed district.

2. After receipt of the petition, the Commission:

- a. May hold a public hearing before the Commission will act on a request to combine conservation districts.
- b. Will consider all comments received by the public.
- c. Will consider all required information provided by the petitioning conservation districts.

- d. Will determine whether consolidation will promote the practice and feasible administration of the proposed consolidated conservation district.
 - e. Will determine whether consolidation will best provide for addressing resource needs contained in each conservation district's authorized conservation program.
 3. Finding in the affirmative for all required elements, the Commission may approve such a combination or consolidation of two or more conservation districts.
 - a. If the Commission denies the petition, a specific statement of the reasons for the denial will be submitted to each of the boards of supervisors of the requesting districts. Any denial of a petition by the Commission may include information on how the districts may resubmit a petition for further consideration.
 - b. If the petition is approved, the Conservation Commission will request the Washington State Secretary of State issue a new certificate of organization, naming and describing the new consolidated conservation district.
 4. After approval of the petition to consolidate:
 - a. The joint boards of supervisors will first select a chairman, secretary and other necessary officers from the consolidated group of supervisors. RCW 89.08.180.
 - b. The consolidated board will select a regular date for meetings. RCW 89.08.180.
 - c. All elected supervisors will continue to serve as members of the board consistent with the schedule submitted as part of the petition for consolidation.

The Commission shall assist all affected conservation districts as needed to effect an orderly and effective transition during the consolidation period.