

Regular Business Meeting

The Washington State Conservation Commission (Commission/SCC) met virtually on May 21, 2020. Chairman Longrie called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Dean Longrie, Chairman and elected west region rep.
Harold Crose, Vice-chairman and elected central region rep.
Larry Cochran, elected eastern region rep.
Sarah Spaeth, Governor Appointee
Daryl Williams, Governor Appointee
David Giglio, Department of Ecology
Jim Kropf, Washington State University
Perry Beale, Department of Agriculture
Julie Sackett, Department of Natural Resources
Jeanette Dorner, Washington Association of Conservation Districts

COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT

Carol Smith, Executive Director
Alicia, McClendon, Administrative Assistant
Alison Halpern, Policy Assistant
Allisa Carlson, Central Regional Manager
Bill Eller, Elections Officer and VSP Coordinator
Jean Fike, Puget Sound Regional Manager
Josh Giuntoli, Southwest Regional Manager
Laura Johnson, Communications Coordinator
Lori Gonzalez, Executive Assistant
Mike Baden, NE Regional Manager
Ron Shultz, Policy Director
Sarah Groth, Fiscal Manager
Shana Joy, District Operations Manager
Stephanie Crouch, Administrative Assistant

PARTNERS REPRESENTED

Lucy Edmondson, US EPA Region 10
Mike Kuttel, Jr., Department of Fish and Wildlife
Roylene Comes at Night, Natural Resource Conservation Service
Sherre Copeland, US Forest Service

GUESTS ATTENDED

Please see "[Attachment A](#)" for full list of attendees.

Consent Agenda

March 19, 2020 Draft Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Dorner to approve the March 19, 2020 draft meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Beale. Motion passed.

Budget and Finance

Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Reductions

Sarah Groth, SCC fiscal manager presented the memo sent to all state agencies from the Office of Financial Management (OFM) directing agencies to reduce their state general funds budget by 15% for the next fiscal year (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021). This equates to a total cut of \$1.231 million to the Commission budget.

The directive also places a ban on new hires, personal service contracts and equipment purchases

Ms. Groth and Director Smith have been identifying areas where savings can be achieved, relying on several factors which include not hiring staff for information technology support, depending on current and future savings, and tapping into funds that are not general-state funds to partially pay for staff salaries. By identifying areas of savings, Ms. Groth and Director Smith are confident the agency can meet the OFM target without putting any SCC positions at risk and without reducing implementation funds to districts.

Motion by Commissioner Crose to allow the SCC Executive Director and Fiscal Manager to make funding decision cuts for fiscal year 2021 within the categories listed below:

- ***Indefinitely postponing new hires, including IT staff. (Note that we are still planning on filling the Office of Farmland Preservation position, if allowed);***
- ***Reducing travel and travel-related expenses;***
- ***Delaying equipment purchases;***
- ***Reducing contracts;***
- ***Taking our 3% overhead on capital funds and using those funds to replace state-general funds;***
- ***Reviewing staff allocations to insure we are taking all activities and fund sources into account; and,***
- ***Finding additional savings and reduction opportunities in our budget.***

Seconded by Commissioner Sackett. Motion passed.

Fiscal Year 2021 Agency Funding Request

As outlined in the memo in the [meeting packet](#), staff is seeking approval to allocate a six month installment of operating funds to districts while the SCC waits for more information on potential additional cuts.

Ron Shultz, policy director noted the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) has been funded out of the Public Assistance Account, as well as the water rights and efficiencies program.

Commissioner Dorner had a question regarding parts of the operating funds and on the ground work, specifically, irrigation efficiencies going through on the operating side. Ms. Groth responded that moving engineering to operating was guidance received from OFM. OFM suggested SCC combine CTA as they can be tied very well together.

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to approve the six month operating funds allocation proposed for Fiscal Year 21 as outlined in attached table on [meeting packet pages 9 & 10](#). (Please see [Attachment B](#)) Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.

2021-2023 Budget Packages

Ms. Groth presented the conservation district budget survey results with members. For the capital budget, CREP, match for RCPP and Shellfish scored high on the survey. Farmland Preservation also scored high, however, projects are not currently ready to go at this time to use the funding. Full survey results are provided in the meeting packet.

Motion by Commissioner Crose to allow staff to move forward the following budget package topics for further development: Operating- Conservation Technical Assistance, Voluntary Stewardship Program, Engineering Project Design and Implementation. Capital – Natural Resource Investments, CREP Riparian Planning, CREP Cost Share, RCPP Match, Shellfish Funding, Farmland Preservation, and Irrigation Efficiencies. Seconded by: Commissioner Spaeth. Motion passed.

WACD Annual Agreement (FY 2021)

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to authorize the WSCC to work with a designated conservation district to work with WACD to enter into an agreement of deliverables as outlined in the [meeting packet pages 21-28, item g.](#), for fiscal year 2021, not to exceed \$65,000.00. Seconded by: Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.

Policy/Programs

Food Policy Forum Update

Ron Shultz, policy director, provided an update to members on the work of the Food Policy Forum (FPF). The FPF was created in 2016 by budget proviso with leads from the SCC, WA State Department of Agriculture and the Office of Farmland Preservation. Recent legislation during 2020 session put the Forum in the SCC statute.

In March JT Austin, policy advisor to the Governor and WSDA Director Derek Sandison requested to engage the Forum on the specific question of how to transition out of the current COVID-19 crisis. The Forum is seen as a place where stakeholders can provide input as the state moves from emergency response to recovery planning.

The Forum has five implementation teams. They are:

- Team 1: Food insecurity
- Team 2: Agricultural land protection and availability and next generation farming
- Team 3: Alleviating barriers to small and medium scale farmers accessing markets, including institutional purchasing
- Team 4: Infrastructure and rural economic development
- Team 5: Impacts of climate change

The implementation teams met once in late March with the full Forum convening on April 9, 2020 to discuss the issue and provide recommendations based on input from the team meetings. Ron provided details on the ideas under consideration in the commission meeting packet.

Mr. Shultz outlined the next steps of the FPF: 1) refinement of near term actions by the Implementation Teams 2) Confirm the near and long term actions by the FPF and 3) outreach and communication of Forum proposals to Governor and legislature.

Mr. Shultz also outlined the next steps involving the conservation districts: 1) Outreach with conservation districts on the work they're doing, and opportunities for them, in support of the food system. 2) Work with WACD to accumulate data on district activities and 3) In association with WACD, conduct outreach and communication with Governor and legislature on the work of conservation districts in support of the food system.

District Operations

Conservation District Elections

Bill Eller, elections officer presented to members the election results from this past cycle. The full results and recommendation for certifications are listed on [meeting packet page 43](#).

Motion by Commissioner Crose to certify and announce the official winners of the 45 conservation district elections, as listed in the table herein entitled: Conservation District Election Results as shown on page 43 of the meeting packet (please see **Attachment C**). Seconded by: Commissioner Sackett. Commissioner Dorner and Cochran abstain. Motion passed.

Mr. Eller also provided an in-depth presentation with different data outputs from past years elections, as well as the many resources, timelines and updates available on the commission website for districts and members of the public to use.

Pierce Conservation District Election

Mr. Eller presented an investigation that occurred at the Pierce Conservation District regarding publishing public statements. The anonymous complaint was received on March 23, 2020 via the SCC online feedback form. Mr. Eller walked members through the process used (also in meeting packet) in the investigation and found the complaint did not rise to the level of significant noncompliance with election procedures necessary to invalidate the election. A solution is to continue to remind staff and supervisors to not take an official position on a candidate, per [WAC 135-110-150](#).

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to accept staff findings in the Pierce CD election investigation and the CD is encouraged in future elections to follow district and commission election policies. Seconded by: Williams. Commissioner Dorner abstain. Motion passed.

West Region Conservation District Appointments

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to appoint all of the un-contested applications submitted for the west region to the appropriate conservation district board of supervisors. They are: Lynn Simpson, Cowlitz CD, Dan Roseburg, Grant County CD, Gary Waltenburg, Grays Harbor,

CD, Alfred Latham, Jefferson County CD, Burr Mosby, King CD, Sharon Call, Kitsap CD, Bruce Anderson, Lewis CD, Michael O'Day, Mason CD, and Al Lougheed, Pacific CD. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.

Whatcom and Whidbey Island Conservation District Supervisor Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Longrie to appoint Suzanne Snyder to the Whatcom Conservation District Board of Supervisors and Mark Sytsma to the Whidbey Island Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Seconded by Commissioner Spaeth. Motion passed.

Central Region Appointed Supervisor Applications

Motion by Commissioner Crose to appoint all of the non-contested applications submitted for the central region to the following conservation district board of supervisors: Lynn Brown, Kittitas County, Cynthia Reed, North Yakima, Jerry Asmussen, Okanogan, Dirk Van Slageren, South Yakima, and Bengt Coffin, Underwood CD. Seconded by: Commissioner Cochran. Motion passed.

Benton Conservation District Board Supervisor Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Crose to appoint Clancy Flynn to the Benton Conservation District. Seconded by: Commissioner Cochran. Motion passed.

Central Klickitat Conservation District Board Supervisor Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Crose to appoint Marty Hudson to the Central Klickitat Conservation District. Seconded by: Commissioner Beale. Motion passed.

Conservation District Supervisor Appointments for the East Region- Commissioner Larry Cochran

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to appoint all the un-contested applications received to the following conservation districts board of supervisors: Michael Broeckel, Adams, Jerry Hendrickson, Asotin County CD, Scott Palmer, Ferry, Palouse Rock Lake, Pine Creek and Spokane. Seconded by Commissioner Crose. Motion passed.

Clark Conservation District Board Supervisor Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to appoint Alice Lombard to the Clark Conservation District Board of Supervisors. Seconded by: Commissioner Crose. Motion passed. Commissioner Longrie abstain.

Presentation: Education and Outreach by Dana Bowers, Stevens County CD

Dana Bowers, is a member of the Communications, Partnership and Outreach (CPO) group. Dana presented on the current projects the CPO group is doing as well as the different partnerships they have developed and the various boards and committees the CPO has a representative on. A few highlights are:

- Washington E3: Dana represents the SCC on this board representing the east side and agriculture and natural resources.

- Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI): participates in sustainability literacy plan—a measure of how well children are being educated to successfully use natural resources and how society uses it from now and into the future. Steering conversation to working lands and how valuable it is.
- Pacific Education Institute (PEI): PEI are currently very spread out and only have one staff member for nine counties. The CPO group will be working with them. PEI has set aside a chunk of money for districts to help educate.

Ms. Bowers highlighted the Conservation Education News and Updates Newsletter. They currently have about 100 subscribers.

Upcoming items the CPO group would like to focus on: Certification through CTD, when available to, they'd like more regional meetings, and are currently developing a Forms for Norms.

Commission Operations

Agency Strategic Action Plan

Due to COVID-19 and the necessary precautions taken to keep members and staff safe, the May commission meeting did not consist of the committed annual in-person Commission Strategic Planning work-session day to review and adjust agency strategic priorities.

Laura Johnson, communications coordinator presented a staff update on the top three out of the ten strategic priority areas, these “top three” listed below were identified by commission members at their May 2019 Commission Strategic Planning Session:

- 1) Sustainable Funding
- 2) Partnering, and
- 3) Communications / Outreach and Marketing

Please see [meeting packet pages 78-88](#) for the full listing of strategic priority updates from staff.

Commissioner Giglio commended the work staff has done and how Laura has compiled the information into a digestible manner to understand.

Chairman Longrie adjourned at 3:00 p.m.