



WDFW to the WSCC



Request of WDFW to be Full Member of WSCC

Ron Shultz, WSCC Policy Director
WSCC Regular Meeting – March 18, 2021

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BACKGROUND:

The Conservation Commission currently consists of 10 voting members, the composition of which is established in statute:

- 2 members appointed by the governor, one of whom shall be a landowner or operator of a farm.
- 3 elected members, at least 2 of which shall be landowners or operators of a farm.
- 5 members representing: the directors of Ecology and WSDA; the commissioner of public lands; the dean of the college of agriculture at WSU, and the president of the Washington Association of Conservation Districts. These members may appoint a designee through delegation of authority.

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BACKGROUND:

State agency representatives on the Commission are identified in statute as “ex officio members of the commission”. This does not mean they cannot vote.

The statute also authorizes the Commission to invite appropriate officers of cooperating organizations, state and federal agencies to serve as advisers to the Commission.

These advisors are not official members of the Commission and do not vote on Commission matters.

WDFW has served as an advisory member of the Commission for many years. There are a number of issues managed by WDFW which overlap with the work of conservation districts and the Commission.

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BACKGROUND:

November 2019 - WDFW Director Kelly Susewind submitted a letter to the Commission requesting WDFW be added to the Commission as a voting member.

December 2019 Commission meeting - Commission discusses the request and considers a number of factors relating to the composition of the Commission. Various options were considered, including the addition of members reflecting other interests including Tribes.

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BACKGROUND:

Key factors in the Commission's discussion included:

- Concerns about balance of representation between agencies and districts;
- The question whether to formalize the Tribal appointment, which now is an informal appointment by the Governor;
- Whether to add representation for urban or small-acreage agriculture.

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BACKGROUND:

After extensive discussion, the following motion was passed:

Motion by Commissioner Cochran to allow staff to distribute the options to the conservation districts for comment per the agency's policy on policies regarding adding a WDFW representative and including options adding potential other members, including a tribal representative to the commission. Seconded by Commissioner Beale. Motion carried.

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BACKGROUND:

Based on this motion, Commission staff submitted a survey to conservation districts for their consideration of the question of adding WDFW to the Commission.

Included with the survey was a memo describing the WDFW request; offered several points for districts to consider when evaluating the request; and presented the districts with five options for consideration.

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BACKGROUND:

The voting was open to all district supervisors. They could vote individually or as a district. We received 70 responses.

A compilation of their response is attached to the meeting memo.

The following is a summary of the vote for each option:

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BACKGROUND:

Option 1: Add WDFW to the Commission as a full member.

Response: yes – 14 no – 56

Option 2: Add one additional representative of CDs if WDFW is added.

Response: yes – 37 no – 33

Option 3: Add one representative of urban or small acreage agriculture if WDFW is added.

Response: yes – 21 no – 49

Option 4: Add tribal representative if WDFW is added.

Response: yes – 52 no – 18

Option 5: No change to the Commission's current membership.

Response: yes – 46 no – 24

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BACKGROUND:

Commission staff also sought input from stakeholders.

Those responses are in the meeting memo.

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Staff Recommendation and Discussion:

Any option for action to change the membership composition of the Commission will require a statutory change. The earliest opportunity to propose this legislation would be at the 2022 Legislative Session since all deadlines for bill passage have passed for this session.

Commission staff recommends Option 5 – No change to the current composition of the Commission.

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Staff Recommendation and Discussion:

Staff believes the primary issue of concern is achieving the correct balance on the Commission of the various interests.

Trick is to balance the Commission while maintaining a manageable size of the body.

We recognize and value the many partnerships we have, and will continue to engage in, with WDFW. This recommendation is not a reflection of these activities.

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Questions and Discussion



Thank you!

Contact:

Ron Shultz

WSCC Policy Director

rshultz@scc.wa.gov

(360) 790-5994



Washington State
Conservation Commission