



Washington Association of Conservation Districts

To: WACD Members
From: Tom Salzer, Executive Director
Date: November 16, 2020
Subject: WACD Strategic Plan
Section 1 – Mission, Vision, and Principles statements
Section 2 – Goals, Approaches, and Scorecard

Context of this strategic plan

In 2019, WACD members asked WACD to develop a strategic plan. WACD staff were tasked with working with a temporary work group to craft a proposal for the Board of Directors. Throughout 2020, parts of a strategic plan were developed and discussed at meetings of the work group and the Board. Input was sought from member conservation districts at critical points. The Board of Directors adopted a new strategic plan at their regular meeting on November 16, 2020.

This strategic plan is a high-level framework that will serve as the foundation for more detailed annual work plans. It consists of two sections containing three elements each. Section 1 covers “evergreen” elements that should rarely need to be changed: mission, vision, and principles. These three elements are fundamental values that act as guideposts as we perform our work.

Section 2 covers the more changeable elements of goals, approaches (think of them as actions without details), and scorecard (strategic metrics). They are intended to evolve as conditions change. These elements are transitional steps between the values/principles in Section 1 and annual work plans that provide more detailed descriptions of action steps and measures.

All elements should be reviewed annually as WACD prepares an annual work plan.

In summary: the mission, vision, and principles statements guide our formulation of goals and strategic approaches. These elements become the basis for constructing detailed, explicit annual plans to actualize our principles and intentions.

Section 1 – Mission, Vision, and Principles

Mission

Put simply, our mission is why we are here, describing in the briefest terms the unique value that WACD provides:

WACD serves as the collective voice of conservation districts to help them achieve their purposes.

Vision

The vision statement succinctly describes our ultimate desired destination:

WACD aspires to fully support conservation districts in their implementation of locally developed conservation programs.

Principles

Principles are descriptions of our most fundamental values. Our values frame and support specific goals and strategic approaches. Principles/values should be evergreen: not changing from year to year. They form the firmament upon which to build annual work plans and to guide our decisions along the way.

Ten guiding principles are adopted:

- 1. We exist to advocate for, and support, member conservation districts.**
- 2. We serve people with dignity and respect, acting with integrity and operating with transparency and accountability to all.**
- 3. We continually seek to become more capable in serving members, including maintaining financial strength, enhancing board capacity, and improving staff capacity.**
- 4. We value and recognize our people for excellence in performance, including teamwork, innovation, timely completion of tasks, and support of others.**
- 5. Our responses to conservation issues are founded on proven methodologies and science.**
- 6. We form and support strategic partnerships to maximize our effectiveness and to reduce duplication of effort.**

7. We seek to conserve natural resources in the way we operate our organization.
8. We believe in, and uphold, the practice of locally-led, voluntary, incentive-based conservation.
9. Private lands – and those who steward them – provide unique and valuable conservation of renewable natural resources to be used today and by future generations.
10. Because natural resources cross jurisdictional boundaries and ownerships, all lands – and the people and entities that manage them – are important in conserving renewable natural resources.

Section 2 – Goals, Approaches, and Scorecard

Goals and Approaches

Goals reflect achievable ideals that spring from the mission, vision, and principles. Since they spring from MVP statements, some goals may be very similar (or even identical) to those statements.

Goals and approaches in the strategic plan are aspirational in character. In annual work plans that are based on the strategic plan, approaches become more explicitly defined as actions that must be time bound and assigned to accountable parties.

GOAL 1: Provide advocacy and support for member conservation districts, seeking continual improvement.

- APPROACH 1.1: WACD will coordinate continuously and closely with the Washington State Conservation Commission and with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in advising and supporting members.
- APPROACH 1.2: WACD will support budget and legislative requests that maintain or improve funding and capacity for conservation districts.
- APPROACH 1.3: WACD will defend and uphold the principle and practice of locally led, voluntary, incentive-based conservation on private lands, based on proven methodologies, science, and community support.

- APPROACH 1.4: WACD will facilitate the resolution of natural resource problems that impact the sustainable use of natural resources with reason and influence.
- APPROACH 1.4: WACD will investigate ways that advocacy and support to members might be improved.
- APPROACH 1.5: WACD will support resolutions adopted by the membership that direct us to advance initiatives that help to maintain or expand conservation district capacity and effectiveness.
- APPROACH 1.6: WACD will facilitate communication and coordination with conservation districts and partners at all levels.
- APPROACH 1.7: WACD will provide timely information, education, training, and leadership to conservation districts and partners.
- APPROACH 1.8: WACD will inspire and educate conservation district supervisors to a full understanding and acceptance of their responsibilities for leadership and governance.

GOAL 2: Act with fairness, integrity, and transparency, being accountable to members and partners.

- APPROACH 2.1: WACD will provide regular updates to members and partners about WACD business operations, priorities, and strategies.
- APPROACH 2.2: WACD will treat others (inside the organization and elsewhere) fairly, graciously, and honestly always.
- APPROACH 2.3: WACD will seek engagement throughout our conservation community and will respect feedback and suggestions from members and partners.
- APPROACH 2.4: WACD will serve others fairly, equitably, and with respect.
- APPROACH 2.5: WACD will act ethically, avoiding conflicts of interest that may impair our effectiveness or impeach our reputation.

GOAL 3: Maintain and strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of WACD.

- APPROACH 3.1: WACD will provide regular learning opportunities to board members to improve their governance capacity and effectiveness.
- APPROACH 3.2: WACD will value employees and help them meet or exceed expectations.
- APPROACH 3.3: WACD will reward superior performance of employees.
- APPROACH 3.4: WACD will operate the Plant Materials Center to provide conservation-grade native plants for conservation districts while meeting or exceeding costs.
- APPROACH 3.5: WACD will operate in ways that respect and conserve natural resources.
- APPROACH 3.6: WACD will seek diversified funding from multiple sources to reduce financial impacts to members and to improve stability in services and operations.

GOAL 4: Form and support strategic partnerships to maximize effectiveness and reduce duplication of effort.

- APPROACH 4.1: WACD will lead efforts to expand understanding by governmental, non-governmental, and tribal partners of the locally led, voluntary conservation ideal and the critical role of conservation districts in addressing important natural resource issues on private lands by regularly hosting informational meetings between districts and partners.
- APPROACH 4.2: WACD will maintain existing partnerships while seeking new partners who can expand and strengthen our capacity and effectiveness.
- APPROACH 4.3: WACD will support partner associations, including the Washington Association of District Employees, the National Association of Conservation Districts, and the National Conservation District Employees Association.

Scorecard

The scorecard is a summary of approaches and activities that gauge our progress toward achieving goals and strategic approaches. The scorecard approach is better positioned to report progress in the context of the annual work plan, but it is also useful to review progress in the wider, longer-lived context of the strategic plan.

GOAL 1: Provide advocacy and support for member conservation districts, seeking continual improvement	
APPROACHES	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
1.1 – WACD will coordinate continuously and closely with the Washington State Conservation Commission and with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in advising and supporting members.	<input type="checkbox"/> Participate in quarterly meetings with WSCC and NRCS. <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in regular (generally weekly) meetings with WSCC staff. <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate messaging on shared topics of concern.
1.2 – WACD will support budget and legislative requests that maintain or improve funding and capacity for conservation districts.	<input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate budget and legislative requests with WSCC. <input type="checkbox"/> Engage lobbyist in support appropriate requests.
1.3 – WACD will defend and uphold the principle and practice of locally led, voluntary, incentive-based conservation on private lands, based on proven methodologies, science, and community support.	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch for threats to these principles. <input type="checkbox"/> Determine strategy and tactics to protect principles. <input type="checkbox"/> Engage all resources needed to defend these principles.
1.4 – WACD will facilitate the resolution of natural resource problems that impact the sustainable use of natural resources with reason and influence.	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage collaboratively with decision makers (elected and appointed) to find solutions acceptable to all parties.
1.5 – WACD will investigate ways that advocacy and support to members might be improved.	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate training opportunities for WACD community members. <input type="checkbox"/> Engage lobbyist in crafting strategies and tactics most effective for our members.
1.6 – WACD will facilitate communication and coordination with conservation districts and partners at all levels.	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop and implement a communications plan. <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly produce newsletter for members. <input type="checkbox"/> Continuously communicate with members and partners, convening meetings when needed.
1.7 – WACD will provide timely information, education, training, and leadership to conservation districts and partners.	<input type="checkbox"/> Share information as needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Support WSCC, WADE, and NRCS in making training available. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek opportunities to educate members. <input type="checkbox"/> Focus resources on leadership responsibilities and development.
1.8 – WACD will inspire and educate conservation district supervisors to a full understanding and acceptance of their responsibilities for leadership and governance.	<input type="checkbox"/> Work closely with WSCC staff to maintain support for good governance practices. <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange for experienced mentors for new supervisors, as needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Share success stories with supervisors.

GOAL 2: Act with fairness, integrity, and transparency, being accountable to members and partners

APPROACHES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
2.1 – WACD will provide regular updates to members and partners about WACD business operations, priorities, and strategies.	<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with members and partners via a regular newsletter. <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in regular meetings of the WSCC and conservation districts.
2.2 – WACD will treat others (inside the organization and elsewhere) fairly, graciously, and honestly always.	<input type="checkbox"/> Executive Director and Board of Directors to monitor actions of the WACD representatives.
2.3 – WACD will seek engagement throughout our conservation community and will respect feedback and suggestions from members and partners.	<input type="checkbox"/> Executive Director and Area Directors will regularly attend member board meetings. <input type="checkbox"/> Request feedback regularly and provide convenient feedback tools.
2.4 – WACD will serve others fairly, equitably, and with respect.	<input type="checkbox"/> Perform annual review with members and partners regarding fairness, equity, and respect.
2.5 – WACD will act ethically, avoiding conflicts of interest that may impair our effectiveness or impeach our reputation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Perform annual review with members and partners regarding conforming to ethical behaviors. <input type="checkbox"/> Audits will include review of agreements and actions that could result in real or perceived conflicts of interest.

GOAL 3: Maintain and strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of WACD

APPROACHES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
3.1 – WACD will provide regular learning opportunities to board members to improve their governance capacity and effectiveness.	<input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate with WSCC and NACD on leadership training opportunities for WACD board members. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a “10-minute training” schedule for WACD board members and deliver at every regular board meeting.
3.2 – WACD will value employees and help them meet or exceed expectations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Perform regular performance evaluations. <input type="checkbox"/> Update job descriptions, collaborating on reasonable performance expectations. <input type="checkbox"/> Include employees in significant decision making. <input type="checkbox"/> Honor and respect feedback and ideas from employees.
3.3 – WACD will reward superior performance of employees.	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop and implement a wage schedule that includes raises based on longevity and contributions to WACD’s success.

<p>3.4 – WACD will operate the Plant Materials Center to provide conservation-grade native plants for conservation districts while meeting or exceeding costs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain sound operations at the PMC. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to produce native plants for use in conservation and restoration projects. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase sales to members and non-members. <input type="checkbox"/> Price plants fairly to provide value to customers and sufficient revenue to WACD. <input type="checkbox"/> Control expenses as needed, seeking to maintain profitability in a variable market. <input type="checkbox"/> Invest in infrastructure to support the long-term viability of the PMC.
<p>3.5 – WACD will operate in ways that respect and conserve natural resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create and implement a recycling policy. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek opportunities to buy used equipment instead of new. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate the viability of incorporating solar panels into the PMC operation. <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce water use. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek to improve soil health on PMC land.
<p>3.6 – WACD will seek diversified funding from multiple sources to reduce financial impacts to members and to improve stability in services and operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate opportunities to generate revenue from sources other than members. <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with the Washington Conservation Society on grant seeking to benefit WACD operations.

GOAL 4: Form and support strategic partnerships to maximize effectiveness and reduce duplication of effort

APPROACHES	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
<p>4.1 – WACD will lead efforts to expand understanding by governmental, non-governmental, and tribal partners of the locally led, voluntary conservation ideal and the critical role of conservation districts in addressing important natural resource issues on private lands by regularly hosting informational meetings between districts and partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Perform regular outreach to partners with messaging that focuses on these principles. <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly share success stories that feature these principles with partners. <input type="checkbox"/> Host informational meetings with members and partners, seeking to build relationships and understanding.
<p>4.2 – WACD will maintain existing partnerships while seeking new partners who can expand and strengthen our capacity and effectiveness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Perform regular outreach and information sharing with partners. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek new partners who can complement and expand our work.
<p>4.3 – WACD will support partner associations, including the Washington Association of District Employees, the National Association of Conservation Districts, and the National Conservation District Employees Association.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Support budget requests that affect WADE, NACD, and NCDEA. <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly share information from these partners. <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly seek additional ways to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of partners in our conservation district community.