

Board Governance and Public Official Conduct



Washington State
**Conservation
Commission**



**CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
OF WASHINGTON STATE**

your window to healthy lands

Aren't “board governance” and “public official conduct” two separate subjects?

Yes.....and No



What is governance?

- The way a (conservation district) is controlled by the people who run it.
- A system and structure of district management based on clear understanding of roles and responsibilities and great policies.

A photograph of a stone wall with a plaque. The wall is made of dark, irregular stones. A light-colored rectangular plaque is mounted on the wall. The plaque has a circular emblem at the top and some text below it. In the foreground, there are green plants with yellow flowers on the left and purple flowers on the right. The text "Cornerstones of Conservation District Board Governance" is overlaid on the image in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Cornerstones of Conservation District Board Governance

Cornerstones of district board governance are...

Know Your Fellow Board Members

Understand Roles and Responsibilities

Conduct Work in an Orderly and Transparent Manner

Community Leadership and Partnering



Know Your Fellow Board Members




Relationships before issues and tasks

Questions to deepen understanding of fellow board members...

- “What inspired you to become a conservation district board member?”
- “What do you want to accomplish as a conservation district board member?”
- “In what areas might our viewpoints be alike or differ?”

Understand Your Roles and Responsibilities

A photograph of the Washington State Capitol building at dusk. The building is a large, classical-style structure with a prominent central dome and a portico with columns. The dome and parts of the building are illuminated with warm, golden light, while the sky is a clear, pale blue. In the foreground, there are some trees and a parking lot with a sign that reads "Nesbitt House Employee Reserved Parking".

Locally led conservation...
it's the law.

Authorizing statute: RCW 89.08

Board roles and responsibilities

- Set the vision, plans, and policy for the district
 - Identify resource needs, program needs, landowner needs, desired future
 - Develop and approve policy parameters for board, staff, and district overall
- Accountability
- Work with decision makers

Accountability and measuring performance



Goals and performance

- Long-range plan
- Annual plan of work and budget
- Evaluation and adaptation

Board annual work calendar and plan

- Regular annual business items
- Planning for evaluation of results and organizational performance
- Regular review of all policies

This can be the hard part of being on a board



- Regular self-evaluation
- If you see something, say something.
- Organizational results and operational performance
- Annual evaluation of the manager
- Your Commission Regional Manager can be of great help here.

**Conduct Work in an Orderly
and Transparent Manner**

Governing boards work as a team

They...

- Have clear lines of communication.
- Establish policies.
- Have officer position descriptions.
- Adhere to a code of conduct.
- Use a process for handling possible conflicts of interest.

Board meetings

- Start on time.
- Have clear agendas with opportunities for public comment.
- Use Parliamentary Procedure:
robertsrules.org/images/ChartofMotions.pdf
- Don't go too long – Be mindful of other people's time as if it were your own.

To be a great board member...



- Show up and pay attention.
- Always have your calendar with you.
- Come prepared.
- Get an early start on board materials.
- Resist the temptation to micromanage.

To be a great board member...



- Leave politics and religion at the door.
- Really listen to and understand your fellow board members.
- Disagree respectfully.
- Hold each other accountable.
- Present a united front.

To be a great board member...




- Look forward, not back.
- Continually review your “road map” mission, vision, and plan.
- Agree on what constitutes “success.”
- Think strategically.

To be a great board member...



- Understand the plan for crises.
- Tune-in to leading indicators.
- Ask for staff research help early.

A group of approximately ten people are seated around a large, dark wooden conference table in a well-lit room. The room features large windows on the left wall, allowing bright natural light to fill the space. The participants, a mix of men and women of various ages, are engaged in conversation or looking at documents on the table. The table is set with several items, including a large white roll of paper, a bowl of fruit, a plate of food, and several bottles of water and juice. A small television is visible on a stand in the background on the left. The overall atmosphere is professional and collaborative.

Your governing board is not only a team with each other but — through your district manager — a team with your employees.

Board governs; staff operates

- Clear communication and expectations between board and district staff prevents painful misunderstandings.
- Supervisors must set policy for district employees.
- Maintain responsibility over a district manager/executive director who manages all staff.
- One district supervisor should be the primary liaison between the board and staff, primarily the manager/executive director.

Staff roles and responsibilities

- Authority of the district manager must be clear and in writing.
- Implement district programs and tasks from the long range and annual plans of work within the adopted budget.
- Abide by policies established by the board.
- Bring ideas and recommendations to manager and board.
- Respect lines of communication.
- Respect board roles and responsibilities.

Community Leadership and Partnering

Conservation districts are only as good as their partnerships!

Partnerships Provide:

- Data and information for district planning.
- Leverage for conservation district funds.
- Project ideas.
- Technical assistance.
- Connections to even more partners!



Conservation districts are only as good as their partnerships!

The function of a conservation district:

“To take available technical, financial and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user for conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources.”

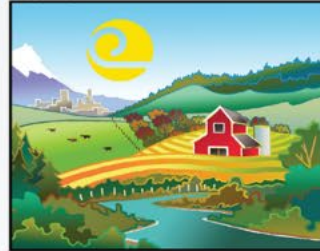
- Dr. Peter Nowak



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your window to healthy lands



WADE



Conservation
from the Ground Up



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources



Office of Financial Management
Better information. Better decisions. Better government.

What does it take to find partners and be a great partner?



Partnership opportunities

Too many to count!

- Watershed groups
- Irrigation districts
- Diking and drainage districts
- Noxious weed control districts
- Regional fish enhancement groups
- Marine Resource Committees
- Agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture groups
- School districts
- Neighborhood associations
- Public and investor-owned utilities
- Health districts
- Realtors
-and on, and on....

Remember, cornerstones of district board governance:

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Understand Roles and Responsibilities

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Community Leadership and Partnering





More information

Contact your Conservation
Commission Regional
Manager:

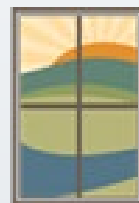
scc.wa.gov/regional-managers

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