

Resolution: A Process and A Product

The resolution process is how Washington's conservation districts collectively work to effect change in laws, rules, policies, and programs at the regional, state, and national level. Both WACD and NACD use resolutions to shape priorities and define the objectives that become association policy. The process may ultimately yield the product of an adopted resolution and effects the necessary change.

Types of Resolutions

There are four types of standard resolutions. They have the same format but their goals are different:

- **Policy** - A statement of acceptable methods or behaviors for WACD – how things are done. This type of resolution proposes a new or amended internal policy for the Association.
- **Position Statement** - A public statement by WACD. These resolutions determine the organization's stance on natural resource issues, federal or state legislative actions, agency rules, or another area where an declared position by WACD would be appropriate. These resolutions may also direct WACD elected leadership and staff to effect specific changes described in the resolution.
- **Recognition** - Makes a declaration that recognizes/honors a person or organization for activities, work, service, or accomplishments that are worthy of special commendation.
- **Study** - Directs that a study be done on the identified subject, usually with recommendations to be brought back to the body.

Good resolutions begin with good research

Researching a potential resolution is critical. It may lead to a quick result if you find the issue was already raised through the resolution process and is being worked on. Research will also help better define the problem needing to be addressed, clearly articulate a recommended solution, and educate others when it comes time to present it through the course of approving a resolution.

A district writing a resolution should identify the need and research solutions, since there is usually more than one solution available. It is not enough to simply state a problem – you need to describe a solution, too. It is important the sponsoring district conducts due diligence in researching the positives and negatives of the various solutions. Previous attempts to address the problem should be reviewed. If other attempts have failed to implement change, it is important to discuss why.

Finally, you should have a clear goal in mind. This is different than the solution. It is more about what will change and why that change is needed. Define what will be improved if the resolution is adopted, as well as potential negative outcomes if the resolution is not passed.

Local development

The local conservation district's role in developing a resolution is the heart of what makes resolutions work. Grassroots leadership means generating solutions at the local level and moving them upward.

District boards working collaboratively have the greatest chance of success when moving a resolution through the process, and it all starts at your district.

Districts should contact other CDs, WACD, or the Conservation Commission to locate others with similar concerns. Work with these individuals and districts to develop clear problem statements and sound actions that will resolve the issue.

If others are already working on the issue you have identified, consider leveraging their work by focusing your efforts on assisting them. However, sometimes an issue isn't fully resolved or it has been given a lower priority by others. In these cases it may be worth raising the issue again through the resolution process. It is highly recommended that in these cases the sponsoring District inform WACD leadership of your desire to increase the priority of the issue.

If it is decided to develop a resolution, it becomes the responsibility of your district to draft a resolution following the general format. And "sponsor" it through the resolution process.

Approve resolution by local CD

The sponsoring district shall take action to approve a resolution for the clearly defined problem with a concise, specific recommendation. This is done during a regular or special meeting of the district board where discussion of the issue can take place and the language of the resolution is debated and ultimately approved. These district resolutions must be adopted before their respective area association meetings in October.

Send resolution to your area association

Resolutions approved by a local CD board should be communicated to the district scheduled to host the current year's area association meeting, as well to WACD. This should be completed at least two weeks before the scheduled area meeting. This is done for two reasons. First, this allows the rest of the area to review the resolutions in advance and to seek any additional information. Second, the resolutions will need to be communicated to WACD for consideration at the WACD Annual Meeting.

Put forward your resolution at your area meeting

The sponsoring district should ensure at least one supervisor or staff member attends the appropriate area association meeting to present the resolution. It is imperative that the resolution have someone to present it and request approval at the area meeting. The sponsoring district should be prepared to speak to those assembled and to answer questions before the area association votes.

This is the first time your research you will pay off. If you state the facts and information persuasively the resolution will have a much better chance for passage. If approved, as written or amended, the WACD area meeting host district shall send the final resolution as passed to the WACD Executive Director or designee.

Attend WACD committee meeting

Resolutions will be assigned to a WACD committee for a recommendation to the full membership. You should talk to other supervisors and associate supervisors about your resolution to inform them of the issue you are trying to address and answer their questions. You can even do this before the WACD annual conference. This will make the approval process much easier. If multiple resolutions contain similar language, WACD will advise the original sponsors to work together to combine resolutions before moving it forward for consideration.

A district should attend the committee to which their resolution is assigned. The committee chair will read the resolution number, title, and recommendation to bring the resolution forward. They will ask if a representative of the sponsoring conservation district is available. The sponsoring district should plan to briefly (three to five minutes maximum) explaining the problem and why the resolution is important. This is the second time a district's research will pay off. The committee chair will open the floor up to further discussion or questions so be prepared to provide answers as questions arise.

When the committee chair feels all pertinent discussion has occurred, or by parliamentary motion to close debate, a vote will occur among the committee members. Committees can also vote to amend a resolution. Committee votes are not binding, they are only recommendations. The three options for resolutions at the committee level are: "Recommend Do Pass", "Recommend Do Pass as Amended", or "Recommend Do Not Pass" and be communicated to the full membership ahead of the Business Meeting.

Attend WACD Annual Meeting

Note: your district's WACD annual dues must be paid by the first day of the annual conference for your district supervisors, or associate supervisors authorized by the district, to serve as voting members at the WACD business meeting.

During the WACD business meeting all resolution heard in committee will come to the floor. Usually, there will be a motion to adopt all the resolutions that came out of committee recommended "Do Pass" without amendments. This is a time saving procedure and assumes these resolutions are favorable to the group and would be approved without much individual debate. If your resolution is included in this group and such a motion is agreed to, then your resolution is officially adopted by the Association.

If a district's resolution passed the committee with a "Recommend Do Pass As Amended" or "Recommend Do Not Pass" it will likely be debated on its own singular merits by the WACD membership. Here is your third opportunity to use that research you did in crafting your resolution. If the vote passes your resolution is now officially adopted.

Follow-up

Okay, so a resolution passed...now what? The work is NOT done. Remember, this is for a volunteer organization. Everyone working together will achieve greater results in a shorter timeframe, and you are likely the resolution's most passionate advocate. It may take years for a resolution to be accomplished, that is why WACD resolutions remain on the books for five years.



Washington Association of Conservation Districts

- **Policy** - If your resolution set policy for WACD, check in periodically with the Association to ensure the policy is being followed. Work with WACD Officers, your Area Directors, and staff to ensure the new policy is being implemented.
- **Position Statement** - Coordinate with WACD leadership and staff to determine the best course of action and continue to work with them (often being the lead). Help develop the necessary relationships and identify key decision-makers (legislators, agency personnel, etc.) to educate for the need for change. You will also be tasked with developing support from partner organizations, agencies, and individuals who can lend additional support. You should strongly consider attending related legislative or agency hearings as well as other relevant meetings. Generally speaking these resolutions take more time to fully realize. The rewards can be great but the investment will equal or exceed the reward in most cases.
- **Recognition** - Work with WACD leadership and staff to see the recognized individual or organization is appropriated honored.
- **Study** - Be prepared to serve on the committee assigned to study a designated resolution and actively participate in the deliberative process.

NACD

For all resolutions seeking to effect change at the national level you must follow your resolution to the National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting. The process here is akin to the state level but will be much more complex, and will involve discussion with representatives from the other state and territorial associations. Work with WACD National Director and others with ties to national conservation organizations to familiarize yourself with NACD procedures. If able, plan on attending the NACD Annual Meeting so you can speak directly with NACD Officers, Executive Board Members, and committee representatives from across the country in promoting your resolution.