

WASHINGTON STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
ELECTIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURE CHANGES
SEPTEMBER 2016

SUMMARY

Conservation Commission members, at their September 15, 2016 meeting, approved changes to the conservation district election procedures and policies, including to the election and appointment manual and consolidating certain on-line election forms. The adopted Elections and Appointments Manual (with changes in red) is posted on the [Commission's election web page](#). Links to the new on-line election forms are also included on that web page.

BACKGROUND

The Commission is authorized in Chapter 89.08.190 Revised Code of Washington to establish conservation district election procedures: *"The Commission shall establish procedures for elections, canvass the returns and announce the official results thereof."*

The Commission has adopted election rules in WAC Chapter 135-110, effective November 19, 2010. District elections are to be conducted annually, and must comply with election rules and procedures. The election procedures exist to assist conservation districts and conservation district supervisors in the election, appointment, and replacement of supervisors in the State of Washington, and to assure fair treatment of all parties involved in such proceedings, and to provide guidance for compliance with WAC Chapter 135-110.

Comments on the proposed amendments were taken from July to September 2016. The Commission reviewed the comments before adopting the changes at its September Commission meeting. The changes are effective for the 2017 election cycle.

The Commission Elections Officer understands the burden on districts when new policies and procedures are instituted, therefore the need for the new policies and procedures must be clear.

The Problem: There are two operative dates in the election cycle that districts must comply with. The first is before the election - each district must inform the Commission of the details of their election by their candidate filing deadline, typically a month prior to the election. [WAC 135-110-210\(3\)](#). The second is that all districts must report all of the rest of the information about their election outcome after the election – within one month of the Election Day. [WAC 135-110-750\(1\)](#). Though compliance has been getting better, districts continue to have difficulty meeting these deadlines. Additionally, districts have difficulty determining which election forms need to be submitted depending on a given election outcome.

The Solution: The election forms used by districts to report to the Commission were migrated from paper to electronic last year. There are five separate electronic election forms. The proposed change would combine those five forms into just two – a "before the election" form, and an "after the election" form. Essentially, [EF1](#) would be kept, and EF2-5 would be combined into just one form ([EF2](#)). So, before the election, all districts would submit [EF1](#) and after the election all districts would submit [EF2](#).

Benefits: Combining these forms would reduce errors related to submitting the correct forms, depending on each districts' election outcome. Further, districts would no longer wonder which forms

they need to submit for their election – ALL districts would submit both [EF1](#) and [EF2](#). Relevant portions of the forms would be available for districts to fill in, but portions of the two forms not relevant would not be active and would not be available to be filled in by the district. So, for example, if a district automatically re-elected an incumbent, then all information about ballot results and other data related to holding an election would not be relevant, so those fields on [EF2](#) would not be active.

CHANGES

Electronic election forms conservation districts are required to submit to the Commission are currently as follows:

EF1 – CD Election Information

EF2 – Candidate Verification

EF3 – Automatic Re-Election Checklist

EF4 – Due Notice Compliance

EF5 – Ballot Results Report

Change: The Commission will retain [EF1](#) and combine EF2-5 into just one form – [EF2 – Election Report](#). All conservation districts fill out both [EF1](#) and [EF2](#) each election cycle. [EF1](#) is due before the election, on or before the candidate filing deadline established by each conservation district. [EF2](#) is due four weeks after the day set by the conservation district for the election (regardless of if the election is held).

There is no change to paper forms conservation districts use for various election purposes. Those are:

PF-A – Candidate Information for Elected Supervisor Position

PF-B – Nominating Petition for Elected Supervisor Position

PF-C – Poll List

PF-D – Ballot Template

There is no change to the electronic appointment forms conservation districts use either to seek applicants to appointed positions or to verify the qualifications of persons the district appoints to serve out the remainder of an elected positions' term. Those are as follows:

AF1 – Conservation District Appointed Supervisor Application (same as old form)

AF2 – Mid-Term Elected Position Appointment Verification of Qualifications (same as old form, but re-titled)

Election and Appointment Manual changes: relevant sections of the elections manual have been amended to reflect the changes listed above. Further, to aid in the election process, new checklists for specific occurrences (the automatic re-election of the incumbent, verifying a candidate's eligibility to serve and be pre-printed on a ballot, and election results) have been created, in addition to a "master" election checklist with relevant links and references to the Elections Manual. Further, the Commission is now requiring, as a best practice, that mid-term vacancies in elected supervisor positions be advertised to the public. To that end, a new policy (Appendix E - Sample Elected Board Positions – Mid-Term Appointments) has been made available for districts. Please see the newly revised Election and Appointment Manual on the Commission's web page here for all the changes.