

Kittitas County Conservation District

January 2012

*Serving
Landowners in
Kittitas County
Since 1942*



Office location:

607 E Mountain View Avenue

Ellensburg, WA 98926 Phone: (509) 925-8585 ext. 4 Fax: (509) 925-8591 Website: www.kccd.net

Volume IX Issue 1

KCCD Celebrates Its 70th Anniversary

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Kittitas Conservation District. Conservation Districts partner with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, formerly the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). The first chief of the SCS, Hugh Hammond Bennett, wanted to awaken public concern for the problem of soil erosion. He observed how soil erosion by water and wind reduced the ability of the land to sustain agricultural productivity and to support rural communities who depended on it for their livelihoods. No event did more to emphasize the severity of the erosion crisis than the Dust Bowl. Beginning in 1932, persistent drought conditions on the Great Plains caused widespread crop failures and exposed the region's soil to blowing wind. A large dust storm on May 11, 1934 swept fine soil particles over Washington, D.C. and three hundred miles out into the Atlantic Ocean. More intense and frequent storms swept the Plains in 1935. On March 6 and again on March 21, dust clouds passed over Washington and darkened the sky just as Congress commenced hearings on a proposed soil conservation law.

As early as 1935 USDA managers began to search for ways to extend conservation assistance to more farmers. They believed the solution



Blowing dust near Upper Badger Pocket Road signified that the problem of soil erosion was not unique to the Plains states (1936).

was to establish democratically organized soil conservation districts to lead the conservation planning effort at the local level. To create a framework for cooperation, USDA drafted the Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Law, which President Roosevelt sent to the governors of all the states in 1937.

In our county, work by the federal Soil Conservation Service (SCS) began in Badger Pocket in 1936. It was one of the first projects of its kind in the Pacific Northwest and lasted for 5 years. Toward the end of that project, a committee of farmers began exploring the formation of a district, a local unit of government that would continue to work with the SCS. In February 1942, a referendum was held at which 437 landowners voted by a 6 to 1 majority to form a District.

On May 26, 1942, the Secretary of State issued the certificate of organization for the "Kittitas Soil and Water Conservation District".

Today, there are over three thousand conservation districts across the country, including the Kittitas County Conservation District. Look for more about our history in the next newsletter.



Measuring erosion in the corrugations following irrigation in a potato field 14 miles SE of Ellensburg in 1938.



by Sarah Zahn

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Energy Initiative:

The 2008 Farm Bill provides authority to use the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to address energy conservation on agricultural operations. Implementation will occur in stages, beginning with the short-term immediate goal of providing an on-farm energy audit or agriculture energy management plan, to help identify how your operation can become more energy efficient. Longer term goals will involve cost-effective implementation of the recommendations provided in your energy audit.

During 2012, the EQIP Energy Initiative is designed to assist producers in two ways:

1. Identify ways to conserve energy on farms through an Agricultural Energy Management Plan (AgEMP), also known as an on-farm energy audit.
2. Provide assistance to implement various recommended measures through the application of eligible conservation practices.

In 2012 only, producers will have the option to apply for energy conservation practices, without having the AgEMP in place. Practices eligible through this special initiative include; Irrigation Water Management, Pumping Plants (including renewable energy and variable frequency drive pumps), residue management, conservation crop rotation, cover crop, windbreak establishment & combustion system improvement. Three ranking periods have been established for 2012: Ranking Period 1: February 3, 2012, Ranking Period 2: March 30, 2012 and Ranking Period 3: June 1, 2012

Interested individuals should contact their local NRCS office for more information.

Conservation Stewardship Program:

This popular program is back in 2012. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary conservation program that encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by:

- Undertaking additional conservation activities; and
- improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities.

To be eligible to participate in CSP, applicants must:

- Demonstrate that they are meeting the stewardship threshold for at least one resource concern; and
- Address at least one additional priority resource concern by the end of the conservation stewardship contract.

CSP payments to an individual or legal entity may not exceed \$200,000 for all contracts entered into during any 5-year period.

Find out if CSP is right for you by visiting <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp> and completing the Self-Screening Checklist! You can also contact your local office for more information. The first established ranking cutoff date for new applications in 2012 is January 27th. However, producers and small forest landowners are encouraged to apply at any time as multiple rounds of funding are expected in 2012.

2011 Accomplishments

The Ellensburg office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service wrote 22 Farm Bill Program contracts in 2011. These contracts will work to conserve nearly 50,000 acres of farm, ranch, & forestland within the county. More than \$880,000 was awarded in funds to Kittitas County landowners & operators in order to implement conservation practices.

NRCS also provided technical assistance to the Farm Service Agency in 2011 in order to secure more than 1900 acres into 10 & 15 year Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) contracts. This program pays landowners \$11/Ac/Year to maintain their farm as open space in order to benefit wildlife as well as maintain a viable agriculture operation. This program has seen little success in the rest of the state and Kittitas County is excited to have such great participation and be able to spend all the funds. We are hopeful that this may result in more money being awarded in the future.

NRCS is enthused to have increased its participation with forest landowners in the last 3 years. In 2009 – 2 Farm Bill contracts were awarded to small forest landowners in this County; 2010 saw 3 successful applicants; and in 2011 8 contracts were awarded. Likewise, NRCS has been able to leverage more funds to assist with these conservation practices.

Another accomplishment that we are proud of is the ability to partner with the Kittitas County Conservation District through special EQIP funds awarded for their proposal for water conservation in the Manastash Creek watershed. The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) money is now in its final year of funding. 2010 & 2011 saw more than \$300,000 worth of cost-share provided by NRCS to implement conservation practices installed in this area. Match funding was provided by KCCD through their grant with the Bonneville Power Administration for Manastash Creek instream flow enhancement and through the Washington State Conservation Commission's Irrigation Efficiencies Grant

(continued from page 2)

Program. Nearly 100% cost-share was provided to producers in exchange for trusting the saved water in perpetuity for instream flow enhancement in Manastash creek. More than \$350,000 is expected to be awarded in 2012 during the final phase of this special cost-share program. The sign-up deadline is January 27th.

For more information on how our programs or staff might be able to work for you and help to conserve natural resources on your property; contact our office at (509) 925-8585 ext. 3; or drop by 607 E. Mountain View.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

You're Invited!

We are pleased to extend an invitation to you and your family to attend our Annual Meeting Dinner scheduled for:

Thursday, February 2nd 2012

Schedule of events:

6:30 - 7:00 PM ~ Arrival/Check-In

7:00 - 8:30 PM ~ Dinner & Presentation

Location: Bella Cucina Catering 213 West 4th Ave.
Ellensburg

Please feel free to call our office for the menu and cost of dinner.

RSVP to Sara or Anna at 925-8585 ext. 4 by January 27, 2012.

Our agenda includes a review of our activities in 2011, as well as the presentation of conservation and volunteer awards. We will also be outlining our activities and priorities for 2012 and would appreciate your input and comments.

We hope that you are able to attend. If you have any questions, please call Sara or Anna at 925-8585 ext. 4.

We look forward to seeing you on the 2nd!

Kittitas County Conservation District

Board of Supervisors

Mark Moore - Chair (Elected - term expires in 2013)
Lynn Brown - Vice Chair (Appointed - term expires in 2014)
Jeff Brunson - Auditor (Elected - term expires in 2015)
Bill Boyum - Member (Appointed - term expires in 2013)
Ron Gibb - Member (Elected - term expires in 2014)

District Staff

Anna Lael - District Manager
Sara Leist - Financial Manager
Suzanne Wade - GIS Specialist
Mark Crowley - Resource Technician II
Ryan Roberts - District Engineer
Sherry Swanson - Project Manager
Brent Dixon - Resource Technician

Board meetings are generally held on the second Thursday of each month. The schedule for the rest of the year:

February 9	1:00 PM
March 8	1:00 PM
April 12	7:00 AM
May 10	7:00 AM

Meeting notices are also posted on the KCCD web page and at the KCCD office. Additional special meetings are occasionally held throughout the year. For more information or to receive e-mail notifications of meetings, contact Anna or Sara at 925-8585 ext 4 or sara-leist@conserveva.net.

KCCD Notice of Election Cancellation

The Kittitas County Conservation District Board of Supervisors hereby informs the voting public that the incumbent, Jeff Brunson, has been re-elected to the currently open seat by reason of being the only person filing for the position by the filing deadline of January 10, 2012. Therefore, no poll site, absentee balloting, or mail balloting will be performed on February 7, 2012, pursuant to WAC 135-110-370. For further information, please contact the KCCD at 509-925-8585, ext. 4.

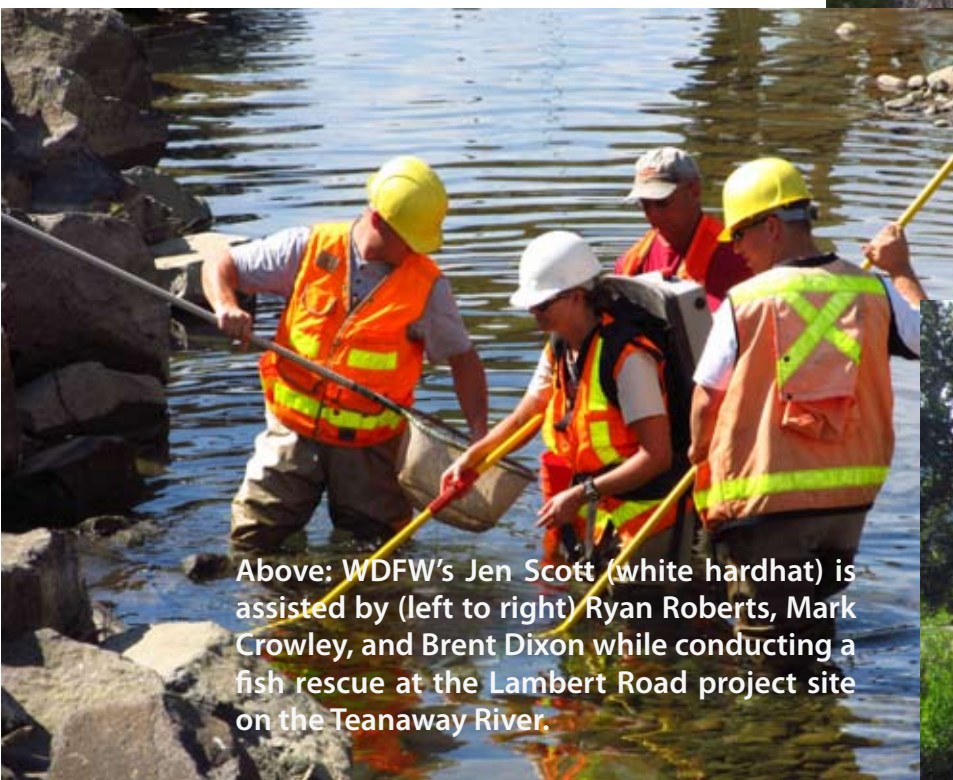
A Few of Our 2011 Projects.....

Before



Through a combined project with DNR, the Wagon Wheel Community in the Teanaway participated in a fuels reduction project. This included a fuel break around the entire community and along many of the roads inside the development. Landowners also took advantage of the program by cost-sharing on thinning, pruning and fuel reduction on their individual properties. Many thanks to Chuck Turbak for his help in organizing the project!

After



Above: WDFW's Jen Scott (white hardhat) is assisted by (left to right) Ryan Roberts, Mark Crowley, and Brent Dixon while conducting a fish rescue at the Lambert Road project site on the Teanaway River.

The Yakima Tributary Access & Habitat Program (YTAHP) is in its 10th year of implementation. YTAHP was initiated to assist landowners and water right holders with projects that address fish protection, fish passage, irrigation efficiency improvements, riparian area improvements and water quality improvements. The base funding for YTAHP has been provided by the Bonneville Power Administration and YTAHP partners have worked to secure matching funds through the Department of Ecology, Salmon Recovery Funding Board, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and others. Projects are a cooperative effort from engineering & design to permitting to construction.



The US Bureau of Reclamation Construction Crew from the Yakima office was contracted to complete the project at Lambert Road.



The Manastash Creek Steering Committee (including irrigators, environmental interests, and state, federal and tribal representatives) toured the Manastash Creek Restoration Project fish screen/diversion sites in May 2011. The tour was in conjunction with a dedication of the project to the late John Arum. John represented the Washington Environmental Council during the course of the project and was greatly respected for his keen negotiating abilities and understanding of each stakeholder's position. Plaques were placed at each of the diversion sites.

The Manastash Creek Restoration Project has been underway for nearly a decade. The project includes providing fish screening and passage through the lower six miles of Manastash Creek and improving instream flows through conservation projects (pipelines and sprinkler conversions) and direct water acquisitions with willing sellers. Work is expected to continue through at least 2013.



Livestock water and spring improvements were completed in 2011 in cooperation with the grazer and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) as part of the Wild Horse CRM Grazing Plan. The grazer replaced tanks and pipelines and WDFW fenced and improved riparian habitat. KCCD funds were provided as cost share to the grazer for materials and WDFW was awarded a grant from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.



The KCCD offers technical and financial assistance to landowners implementing small projects. Financial assistance (cost share) is available with an emphasis on improving water quality and water use efficiency. Potential projects may include piping earthen delivery ditches (like the one picture here), converting to sprinkler systems or installing livestock control fences. Landowners with approved agreements can be reimbursed for project costs at a 50% rate up to \$3,000. In 2011, 5 projects were completed and 6 more were approved and are expected to be completed by April.

Changing Minds A bout Forest management

The public perception is that, to save a tree, society should let it be. It's a message we're reminded of at social gatherings and in television advertisements. And many schoolchildren think it's "bad" to cut trees. Susan Schultz, NACD's Stewardship, Education and Marketplace Project Manager, has worked with students for over 31 years to promote conservation awareness. "When conducting a forestry lesson I have always asked, 'Should we cut down trees?' and about 90% of the time students say 'No,' as well as many adults," Schultz says.

However, many conservation leaders would disagree. The best way to save trees, they say, is to properly manage our forestland, and often this requires cutting trees.

It's a tricky message to promote – save trees by cutting trees – but conservation districts are well positioned to change public opinion through education, face-to-face instruction and resource sharing.

But, suggests NACD Forest RPG member Tom Crowe, "Before we can change the public's perception of tree cutting, we must first fully understand it."

A few common misconceptions about managing the forest:

Misconception: Tree removal is bad for the forest ecosystem

In many instances, thinning is actually good for the forest. It creates more room for the remaining trees to grow and helps to clean up the forest floor. In an overcrowded forest, every tree is stressed and made to suffer. "Overpopulation is not good for any species," says Crowe. A well-managed forest is also a healthier environment for wildlife inhabitants.

In addition, removal of diseased or insect infested trees sanitizes the forest preventing additional spread which often results in additional mortality.

Misconception: Mother Nature doesn't need our help

It's true, Mother Nature has the tools to take care of herself. Natural occurring wildfire can clean up the forest, allowing for regeneration. But in many areas the boundaries between civilization and wilderness have become blurred, and when fire is suppressed it only leads to bigger, more intense fires when they do happen. This impacts people, homes and budgets. When civilization manages the forest responsibly, it limits the threat of catastrophic wildfire.

Adds Crowe, "We also need to realize that our past actions have created new problems, including many that are very devastating. Exotic insects, diseases, and plants have decimated some species and numerous plants are rapidly spreading, like a wildfire through our forests. These are problems that we need to address as early as possible to control or at least slow the spread."

Misconception: Tree harvests are designed to do one thing: generate income

Not true, says Crowe. "When I do a timber sale for a landowner, we're looking for areas of concern, and we address those concerns through cutting those trees," he says. "You don't sell trees based on what they're worth, you sell based on a lack of potential or problems. If you do that, the forest will be healthier, more productive, and financially more secure." Diseased, insect infested, storm or fire damaged, or defective trees, for example, will only be worth less with each passing year. Common sense dictates what to harvest, Crowe says. Healthy trees can grow in value. Ideally they are sold after they have reached their peak, but before they begin to decline.

Changing public perception is not easy; it requires reversing how we've been trained to think for decades. This can be best accomplished using a variety of tactics. "Harvest trees that have reached their potential and make sure healthy trees grow in their place. Also, be proactive. Do not ignore problems, especially invasive species," he says. "I don't see any messaging saying it is OK to cut trees, when properly managed," says Schultz. "We need to address the issue of 'confusion in the marketplace' and what ads should say instead." By offering evidence, conservation leaders can begin to change the focus of the argument. Says Crowe, "We need to look at the forest and not the trees. What's bad for the tree is sometimes good for the forest. *This article is an excerpt from the December 2011 issue of NACD's Forestry Notes.*



An overcrowded forest like the one pictures above is not a healthy forest.

Kittitas County Open House Events

On November 30, 2011, as authorized by ESHB 1886, the Kittitas County Board of Commissioners adopted Ordinance No 2011-012, electing to participate in the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP), as an alternative to RCW 36.70A.060, for protecting critical areas in areas used for agricultural activities.



While the County is not required to implement the VSP until adequate State funding is available, the County will be hosting public open house events to provide information regarding the various aspects of the VSP and any updates on the timing for availability of funding. The open house events are tentatively scheduled for February 28 and/or February 29. To get notice of the open house via email, subscribe to the County email updates for the VSP at:

<http://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/cds/voluntary-stewardship/>

If you have questions or comments that you would like the County to provide information for during the open house events, you may submit written comments to the County.

Comments can be submitted via:

email to: VoluntaryStewardship@co.kittitas.wa.us

OR in person or via US Mail:

Kittitas County Community Development Services,
411 N. Ruby Street, Suite 2
Ellensburg, Washington 98926

Annual Plant Sale

The 2012 Roy & Marge Bach Memorial Conservation Plant Sale, an annual fund-raiser for the KCCD's youth education program, begins in January. The proceeds go toward scholarships for educational materials and transportation costs for natural resource field trips, agricultural farm tours, and other related educational activities for local youth. Our goal is to educate the leaders of tomorrow about the importance of natural resources and to direct them toward becoming responsible land stewards. This plant sale is named in memory of Roy and Marge Bach, who were local residents and friends of the Kittitas County Conservation District. Orders are accepted on a first come, first served basis for the following varieties of tree and shrub seedlings selected for local conditions.



Prices range from \$6.50-\$9.00 per bundle of 5 and order forms are available at the KCCD office or on-line at <http://kccd.net>. Success of this plant sale is due primarily to donations and volunteer time. The KCCD partners with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). In addition to the KCCD recruited volunteers, RSVP provides volunteers to sort and bundle the 7,000 plants into individual orders. Mel Shenyer generously provides a refrigerated trailer to protect the seedlings prior to customer pick-up. Come by and pick-up your order form--or send one in on the web at kccd.net.

Kittitas County Commissioners to consider Flood Control Zone District

As a result of three major flood events in two years, the Board of County Commissioners in February of 2011 convened a Citizens Advisory Committee to study the physical and financial impacts of the countywide flood problem. The Citizens Advisory Committee voted unanimously (with one abstention) to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners that a Flood Control Zone District be formed and established immediately for Kittitas County. The basis for this recommendation for action by the Board of County Commissioners of Kittitas County was heard during the regular Agenda Session of January 18, 2012. A scheduled series of public open houses will be set over the next five months to give citizens an opportunity to gather information on the activities of the Citizens Advisory Committee prior to the Board of County Commissioners taking official action. The BOCC is expected to take formal action on this matter on June 27, 2012.

The Flood Control Zone District (FCZD) may be formed pursuant to 86.15 RCW and to address flood management needs within Kittitas County. The activities of the district may include, but are not limited to, flood warning and emergency response, flood proofing and elevation of structures, property acquisition, implementation of consistent development regulations that recognize the impacts of flooding, basin-wide flood planning, and the identification, engineering, and construction of capital projects to mitigate and/or address flooding problems.

For more information on flooding issues in Kittitas County, visit <http://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/publicworks/flood/>.



Visit KCCD on the web at kccd.net

Firewise Workshop sponsored by the DNR April 10 & 11



The Washington Department of Natural Resources in conjunction with local and federal partners proudly present a two-day Firewise workshop

- ◆ Overnight lodging and lunch on day 1 will be provided for this two day intensive workshop which begins at 9:30 a.m. You do NOT need to be a fire professional to attend.
- ◆ Learn how individuals and communities may reduce unnecessary losses from wildfires in rural areas that are facing rapid development and in areas historically damaged by wildfires.
- ◆ Learn about DNR programs that offer assistance for identifying and removing dangerous fire fuels; chipping and disposal of tree parts and brushy vegetation; and creating defensible space.
- ◆ Take part in a computer-based exercise to develop a mitigation plan for a fictional community facing catastrophic wildfire.
- ◆ All participants who complete the workshop will receive free training materials.

For additional information contact:

Debbie Robinson
Southeast Region DNR
713 Bowers Road
Ellensburg, WA 98926 (509) 925-0966 debbie.robinson@dnr.wa.gov

Firewise Cost Share

The KCCD is now offering fire protection cost share assistance on a yearly basis to qualified landowners. Applications for fire protection cost share will be available year round and cost-share will be provided on approved projects as funding is available. Projects can include, but are not limited to, fuel reduction projects, shaded fuel breaks, roving chippers or Firewise workshops. Last year over \$50,000 was distributed for Firewise projects under this cost share program.

Communities are encouraged to apply not only because cost share dollars go further, but also because the more neighbors that participate, the more defensible the area becomes. Additional funding may be available for these larger community projects.

Interested parties can pick up an application at the KCCD office or download one from our website (kccd.net). Contact Suzanne at 509 925-8585 ext. 113 or email suzanne-wade@conservewa.net if you have questions.



◆ 2011 in Review

◆ Plant Sale

◆ Partner Information

◆ Forestry Management

◆ Anniversary

◆ Conservation District's 70th Year

Inside:

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607 E Mountain View
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