

the CONSERVATION VOICES

VOICES

Winter 2016

A quarterly newsletter produced by the Foster Creek & South Douglas Conservation Districts

Voluntary Stewardship Program

By Jon Merz, FCCD

Douglas County commissioners accepted a \$270,000 grant from the state to identify environmentally critical areas and create a plan to guide farmers who own that land.

The Washington State Conservation Commission grant allows the county to follow an alternative approach for agricultural lands, instead of the regulatory requirements under critical area ordinances which are required under the state's Growth Management Act.

Douglas County is one of several counties opting into the Voluntary Stew-

ardship program, which is developed through a planning process involving stakeholders, and uses incentives to protect critical areas while promoting agriculture.

In Douglas County, commissioners asked the Foster Creek Conservation District to create the plan because the district already has the staff knowledgeable in the work.

District Manager Jon Merz, said the need to create a

plane came out of the a state Supreme Court decision that found the Growth Management Act does require critical area designations on agricultural lands, and not just in urban areas.

Merz said critical areas include wet-

lands, frequently flooded areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, geologically hazardous areas, and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas.

Farmers won't be asked to stop farming an area, or change their farming practices even in areas deemed critical or sensitive. If a farmer currently has an activity in that area, they can continue with it. If they want to start a new activity, it has to follow what's in that sensitive-areas ordinance.

The plan's goal will be to identify and maintain economically viable agriculture while protecting and restoring critical areas. The district is in the development process now, so we don't know exactly what it's going to look like.

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Annual Enrollment Period for 2016 USDA Safety Net Coverage (ARC-PLC) Continues

By Michel Ruud, FSA

Producers who chose coverage from the safety net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, can now sign contracts to enroll in coverage for 2016 in county FSA offices. The enrollment period will continue until Aug. 1, 2016.

Although the choice between ARC and PLC is completed and remains in effect through 2018, producers must still enroll their farm by signing a contract each year to receive coverage.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local FSA office to schedule an appointment to enroll. If a farm is not enrolled during the 2016 enrollment period, producers on that farm will not be eligible for financial assistance from the ARC or PLC programs should crop prices or farm revenues fall below the historical price or revenue benchmarks established by the program.

The two programs were authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill and offer a safety net to agricultural producers when there is a substantial drop in prices or revenues for covered commodities. Covered com-

modities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. For more details regarding these programs, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc.

For more information, you are encouraged to visit your local FSA office. In Waterville, call 745-8561.

Foster Creek Conservation District Reboots Riparian Enhancement Program

By Jason Brooks

Foster Creek Conservation District is gearing up for the 2016 and 2017 restoration seasons. We'll be enhancing over 7 miles of perennial and seasonal streams in the Foster Creek watershed with riparian plantings over the next two springs. These streams are near headwaters of inputs into Foster Creek, which has been documented by the Washington Department of Ecology to have higher surface water temperatures than is healthy for the aquatic life calling them home. Over the next several years, FCCD hopes to expand the restoration program to offer assistance to more landowners interested in restoring riparian buffers on their land. These buffers serve important functions for wildlife and fish habitat, water quality, and erosion control.

The buffers are typically 75' wide on each side of the stream and include species of trees and shrubs that are historically found in Douglas County. It's not only water loving species, though. There are several drought tolerant native trees and shrubs that grow a little further upland than the typical trees and shrubs you think of when you think of riparian areas. For example, rocky mountain juniper and ponderosa pine are found in the County and grow in swales and on the north faces of hills and deeper draws. You can also find chokecherry in area, which is a great flowering shrub that grows in the transition area between streams and shrub-steppe plant communities. Many of the same species FCCD will be planting for riparian enhancement can also be used for climate appropriate home landscaping designs.

If you have a stream reach on your property that you would like to see restored, contact the FCCD office at 509-888-6372 or visit us online at www.foster-creekcd.org. A staff member will answer your questions and schedule a visit with you on your property to assess your stream reach as a potential project.

Kay Fisher Retires

After nearly 20 years a Foster Creek Conservation District, Kay has decided to retire. She wants to spend more time with her family and volunteer adventures.

We will miss you Kay!



Cost Share Available



Douglas County Windbreak. Photo by Carol Cowling

By Carol Cowling

A focus of South Douglas CD is providing cost share dollars to landowners within the district for conservation practices. We can fund up to 75% of a projects for windbreaks, dams and terraces, irrigation updates, livestock

projects or any number of Best Management practices. If you are interested in any project, please contact Carol Cowling. New requirements extends the preliminary period before work can begin, so let us know now!

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WHAT'S YOUR ADDRESS?

South Douglas has available free blue reflective address signs for 100 Douglas County rural residents. Emergency vehicles, including fire trucks, can have a hard time finding your residence that may

be hidden from the main road. Chelan County Fire District #1 will make these signs for us. If you need an address sign, call Carol at 745-9160 so she can order one for you.

5th Annual Women in Agriculture Conference

Mark your calendar and join us for inspiration, knowledge and networking on Saturday, March 19, 2016 for the 5th Annual Women in Agriculture Conference. It will be held in Wenatchee.

"Power Up Your Farm" is the theme for the fifth annual Women in Agriculture Conference and will be an engaging, interactive day full of inspiration, learning and networking with other women farmers. This conference is a one-day event held simultaneously in 31 locations throughout Washington, Alaska, Idaho, Montana and Oregon.

Power Up Your Communications - Communication is the most powerful tool for building business and personal relationships. Our ability to influence people is directly related to how we communicate. This conference will help you discover your communication style and how to use it to manage, motivate and influence people. You will learn to "pull out" your personality traits to change as the situation changes. Confidence in your ability to be a successful farmer will strengthen your farming operation.



Power up Your Farm - Different personality styles impact the way we interact with customers, family, business contacts and employees. Women farmers know how to produce their product. Sometimes, however, our communication style makes it difficult to sell that product, motivate an employee, convince a lender or landlord or get along with family members or a

business partner. Your new skills will help you build better teams, improve decision making and connect marketing to what motivates prospects and customers.

Visit the website for more information: www.WomenInAg.wsu.edu or contact me at WSU Extension. Donna Rolen donna.rolen@wsu.edu (509) 745-8531

It's Biocontrol Time!



FCCD is again offering biological insects for control of many of the common weed species such as Dalmatian toadflax, Canada thistle, diffuse knapweed, and others in Douglas County. If you are interested in participating, please contact Jon Merz at the FCCD office: 509-509-888-6372 or email: jmerz@fostercreek.net

~ **Deadline to sign-up is April 15, 2016.** ~

Yes, I am interested in biological control for Spring 2016! Please contact me:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Cell: _____

Return to: Foster Creek Conservation District
Attn: Jon Merz
P.O. Box 398
Waterville, WA 98858
Or email: jmerz@fostercreek.net

Foster Creek Board Member Update

By Kay Fisher

At the Foster Creek and South Douglas Annual Meeting Wade Troutman was reelected as Board Supervisor. Wade has served on the conservation district board for over 30 years. Wade was instrumental in the development of the Douglas County Multiple Species General Conservation Plan and currently serves on the National Association of Conservation Districts Board.

Kelsey Tanneberg has been appointed to the Foster Creek Conservation Board. Kelsey is a dry land wheat farmer out of Mansfield. Kelsey's interests in becoming a member of the Foster Creek Conservation District Board derives from a desire to continue to see conservation of land, resources and wildlife habitat. It is Kelsey's belief that the producers and operators on our districts' lands are truly the best conservationists. Local control of our lands and what is produced and exists on them, while working in conjunction with and by meeting the requirements of government regulation is vital. Kelsey looks forward to being a part of the process to ensure a sustainable future for the current generation and those to come.

Conservation Districts' Hold Annual Meeting

Over 65 people were in attendance for the Foster Creek and South Douglas Conservation Districts' annual meeting Jan. 26th at the former Mansfield Grange.

The meeting lasted from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and included presentations from FSA and NRCS regarding updates of the farm programs available, a pesticide credit course covering Chemical Control and Direct Seed provided by David Dye, CCA of Crop Production Services and another pesticide credit course covering Medusa Head and Ventenata grass control and grazing options presented by Steve Van Fleet of WSU Extension Whitman County. A round table discussion on Direct Seed presented by Rob Dewald Past President Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association included discussion on what works and doesn't work when attempting Direct Seed.

Jerry Robinson of Washington State Crop Improvement Association presented on Seed Certification, and both Foster Creek and South Douglas Conservation Districts gave updates on their programs. Coffee and maple bars were provided by The Blue Rooster Bakery and lunch was provided by Jack's Resort.

Water Conservancy Board Seeking Members

The Douglas County Water Conservancy Board is seeking a new member to complete its three member board. Water Conservancy Boards were created in 1997 to enable the processing of water-right transfers and change applications at the local level. All board commissioners receive training from the Department of Ecology before participating in any decisions.

The commissioners are appointed by the Douglas County Commissioners. Currently, this is an unpaid position that normally meets once a month in Waterville to review applications. Applications have included changing use of water, place of use and point of diversion.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please send a letter of interest to the Douglas County Commissioners at Box 747, Waterville, WA 98858. For more information, contact the WCB office at 745-9160.



Annual Tree and Shrub Sale

By Carol Cowling

It is time for the 27th Annual Tree and Shrub Sale. Sponsored by South Douglas, the catalog has native and hardy plants for Douglas County.

While native plants are the primary focus, we also have other plants that grow well in North Central Washington. Trees for shade or windbreaks, plants for wildlife or privacy, shrubs for soil erosion or fall color – most are in one or two gallon pots for easy handling.

Some are bareroot, for planting right away. The catalog has over 70 plant descriptions, prices, and order blank.

The tree and shrub sale catalogs are available at the District office, or call 745-9160 for a mailing or more information. Orders will be taken until March 21, with pickup at the NCW Fairgrounds in Waterville April 2. More plants will be available at the sale, as well as vendors with garden themed items for sale.

Eddie Greer Reelected

Eddie Greer has been reelected to his supervisor position on the South Douglas Conservation District Board. Eddie's approach to conservation is a good balance to the farmers currently on the board. We strive to have a diverse board to listen to all conservation needs within the district. Eddie, now from East Wenatchee, has been on the board for ten years. Thanks, Eddie, for all your help.

Each of the Conservation Districts within the County have a five board elected or appointed membership. But both always have positions open for associate members. If you are interested in getting involved, let us know.

Partnership Paves the Way to Conservation

By Lisa Dowling, Pheasants Forever

Douglas County is known for its diverse landscape, friendly faces, and plentiful natural resources. For generations, families have forged a life here, with farming and ranching forming the backbone of this community. Communities such as these are why the Sage Grouse Initiative was created, with the goal of using the NRCS Farm Bill conservation programs to sustain working rangelands that enhance both range and wildlife resources across the landscape.

Since 2010, the SGI has set a new precedent within the realm of conservation. This new paradigm for conserving at-risk wildlife works through voluntary cooperation, incentive-based conservation programs, and partnerships at the federal, state, and local levels. Privately-owned grazing lands constitute some of the most productive and intact habitats available to not just the greater-sage grouse, but also the 350 sagebrush steppe

obligate species that depend on these ecosystems for survival.

The sagebrush steppe ecosystem comprises a wide variety of habitats, each of which support a diversity of plant communities that vary in vegetative structure and composition over space and time. Disturbances, either natural or human caused, influence the dynamic shifts in these plant communities. Through implementing prescribed grazing plans, we can manage the dynamic nature of these systems through strategic disturbance to meet specific management and conservation objectives. Through the implementation of prescribed grazing systems, we are able to restore and enhance sagebrush ecosystems, which has been shown to prevent up to 60% loss of available forage for livestock while also providing critical nesting and forage cover for sage grouse.

This year we are launching SGI 2.0 with a commitment from NRCS of \$211 million for the life of the new Farm Bill.

Through SGI 2.0, Douglas County will receive easement funding for the conservation of shrub-steppe ecosystems through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and the Agricultural Lands program (ALE). In partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, we have identified a core area surrounding known sage-grouse leks that will be the focus of SGI in Douglas County for the next several years. Approximately 75% of funding will be allocated to enrolling acres that lie within this core area, while the other 25% will be allocated to enrolling acres in adjacent areas with suitable habitat. We aim to develop prescribed grazing plans on an additional 41,000 acres of sagebrush steppe habitat within the core areas of Douglas County over the next few years, and we look forward to the partnerships and relationships we will cultivate on the path to conservation.

Is the drought over?

By Carol Cowling

According to Washington Department of Ecology, the 2016 snow pack is 118% of normal in central Washington. The Department of Ecology's statewide drought emergency declaration was not extended into 2016. Governor Jay Inslee's Executive Water Emergency Committee (EWEC) has recommended that Ecology not extend the drought declaration at this time.

With the amount of snow still on the ground around Douglas County, it would seem that we should have plenty of water this summer. But will we? What if the temperature suddenly warms up and all the snow runs off the fields? Or this is the last moisture we have until July? Looking at different maps on the Internet, it looks like Douglas County, particularly the eastern portion may still have drought conditions.

Drought or not, our water supply is no longer a luxury. Conservation measures to protect what water we have is essential.

Even during the winter, you can limit the amount of wasted.

- If you let your faucet drip during

very cold nights, remember to turn off the faucet once it warms up. Frozen pipes can be disastrous, but once the threat is over, turn off that faucet.

- Fix running toilets. Toilets are by far the main source of water use in the home: nearly 30 percent of residential indoor water consumption. A leaky toilet can waste 200 gallons per day. That would be like flushing your toilet more than 50 times for no reason! A good inside project.

- Shoveling snow? Toss the clean snow at the base of nearby trees and plants. As the snow melts, the water will help give the plants a boost of moisture for spring. It's good exercise to shovel snow and you can help your plants at the same time.

- As you are looking at the plant catalogs, consider native and drought tolerant plants. Designing a garden that uses these plants can be a good alternative to planting turf or plants that require a lot of water.

- Planning for this year's garden, also

consider drip irrigation and timers. Even soaker hoses will reduce the amount of evaporation and water lost during the growing season.



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Please contact Carol Cowling, if you would like to be added to our mailing list.

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Article contributions and ideas are also welcome.

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