

# Walla Walla County Conservation District

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## INTRODUCING TRACY DAILY NRCS SOIL CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN

The Walla Walla Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff increased by one recently when Soil Conservation Technician (SCT) Tracy Daily accepted a transfer to WA. Tracy started her career with NRCS in 2007 in AZ after neighbors and friends in CO introduced her to the agency. Prior to her NRCS employment, she served as an Earth Team Volunteer in CO and worked as a District Tech. in both CO & NM.

Tracy is a 2005 graduate of the University of Wyoming (Laramie) with a B.S. /Distributed degree in Math & Science (natural resources concentration). Tracy has varied interests outside of work and looks forward to exploring the great Northwest.



## NOT WANTED: JAPANESE KNOTWEED, INVASIVE WEED

Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) is one of four species of knotweed that is becoming a concern along salmonid-bearing streams. This native of Asia was imported without its natural predators and diseases and is capable of out-competing native plants for water and nutrients. In fact, this noxious weed is so competitive that it can eliminate our riparian native plants and create a monoculture.

Fortunately, Japanese knotweed is been found only in the upper Mill Creek drainage in Walla Walla County. Efforts are underway by the WWCCD to obtain funding to assist landowners control the weed under control while the population is still isolated.



## **WSCC CERTIFIES McCONNELL RE- APPOINTMENT FOR 5TH THREE YEAR TERM AS SUPERVISOR**

Pat McConnell was recently nominated to again serve in one of the two appointed supervisor positions on the WWCCD Board. This will be Pat's 5th term in this capacity.

# TWO EXCITING NEW PRACTICES ANNOUNCED UNDER THE CREP

With very little fanfare, the local Farm Services Agency (FSA) office announced last month two new practices created at the national level and signed off on by NRCS and the FSA National Board of Directors. Both of these new practices are now available for use here in Walla Walla County. These new opportunities are the Hedgerow and the Wetland Restoration practices.

## **New Hedgerow Practice**

This great new practice is eligible on cropland or marginal pasture land that has a direct tributary stream connected to it that is 15-feet in width or less. The hedgerow planting is only 15-feet wide and planted at a rate of 1100 native plants per acre. So this is a greatly reduced area by comparison to the 35' CREP minimum for a riparian forest buffer. Eligible streams can be up to 10 miles away from the main stem of a drainage. These must be CREP eligible streams that have a connection to fish bearing rivers. The contract length, like CREP, is not less than 10 nor more than 15 years. Rental rates are based double the weighted average rental rate of the three most predominant soils in the offer. Cost-share for installation is based on a 75% incentive, which means that the land owner must come up with a 25% match. Like all CREP programs there is a Signing Incentive Payment (SIP) as well as a Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) made to landowners that enter this program. The new Hedgerow practice has great potential for those locations along cropland fields that border on eligible small streams. The minimum and only width is 15' and that will work well for many landowners that want a buffer, yet do not want to give up the wider buffers that a CREP riparian forest buffer requires.



## **New Wetland Restoration Practice**

This new practice covers those wetlands that are hydrologically connected to designated CREP eligible streams and rivers. Any croplands bordering or having wetlands within fields are eligible as long as the water in these wet sites is connected to a CREP designated stream or river. The contract length is the same as CREP, not less than 10 nor more than 15 years. The FSA will cover 100% restoration costs. There are SIP and a PIP incentive payments made to landowners once they sign up for this great new practice. The rental rates are determined by soil type and the area size will be delineated by a trained NRCS wetlands specialist.



Both of these new practices are going to fit in very well here in the Walla Walla Valley. Interested landowners are encouraged to contact FSA, NRCS or the WWCCD at 509-522-6340. *By: Mike Denny, Riparian Restoration Coordinator.*



# **BARRIERS TO FISH MIGRATION REMOVED** **FROM SPRING CREEK**



***Lower Barrier—Before***



***Lower Barrier—After***



***Upper Barrier—Before***



***Upper Barrier—After***

Spring Creek is one of several tributaries to Dry Creek in Walla Walla County with its confluence about three miles southwest of Dixie, WA. Due to culverts, bridges and drop structures, the creek has been inaccessible for fish since 1921 when the bridge into the A. L. Kibler Farm was built.

Although Spring Creek is somewhat “flashy” by nature—subject to rapidly increasing flows due to weather events like warm “chinook” winds when fields are snow covered or intense rainfall—it has been known for many years that its base flow is spring fed with good quality and very cold.

As the staff of the WWCCD looked around the county to see where there might be barrier removal opportunities. Spring Creek slowly gained some attention. Riparian Projects Coordinator Mike Denny began focusing effort on the creek’s two lower barriers in late 2008. After site inspections with representatives of the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), funding was sought and obtained from Bonneville Power Administration to re-create passage.

Dick Rubenser, the selected contractor, began construction in late February of this year. Of the several alternatives considered, it was determined that a series of step-up weirs constructed of rock and large wood was the preferred method of remediation. Although the creek is not large, the barriers were significant with an approximate 4.5-foot drop at the lower bridge barrier and a 5-foot plus drop at the upper culvert/grade stabilization structure barrier.

Except for some final tree planting, the project was completed in late May. The project’s total cost was \$101,300 and opened up passage for an additional two miles of Spring Creek.

A special thanks go to land owners Jay Nowogrowski and Margaret Kibler for allowing these projects to be constructed on their property. *By: Larry Hooker, Agricultural Projects Coordinator*

# **2010 A GREAT YEAR FOR STEELHEAD IN THE TOUCHET RIVER**

This winter and spring, the entire Columbia Basin has enjoyed a huge spike in adult steelhead returns. And while the increased fish numbers in the Touchet River system cannot be directly attributed to passage and habitat improvements in the watershed, it is highly probable that they helped. The installation of a new fish ladder at Hofer Dam in 2005 removed a full river width passage barrier and created unrestricted access to over 180 miles of upstream river habitat. The creation and development of approximately 60 riparian forest buffer contracts covering almost 1,600 acres and treating almost 80 streambank miles with over 670,000 native trees, shrubs, and grasses are helping to keep the water cleaner and cooler as the vegetation matures.

What type of numbers are we talking about? As of April 25th, the Touchet River trap above Dayton had accounted for 583 natural steelhead, 146 hatchery endemic stock steelhead, and 40 Lyons Ferry stock hatchery steelhead (removed and placed in the Dayton juvenile fishing pond).

There is also a fish trap operating on Coppei Creek above Waitsburg. To date, WDFW has counted 129 adult steelhead in the trap including five hatchery steelhead. Total redd counts in the Coppei now total 76 which is about double the number of redds seen in past years. *By: Larry Hooker, Agricultural Projects Coordinator.*

## **Walla Walla County Conservation District**

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Mike Denny, Riparian Project Coordinator  
Jeff Klundt, CREP Maintenance Technician  
Larry Hooker, Ag. Projects Coordinator  
Lisa Stearns, Civil Engineering Technician

### **NRCS Staff**

Ed Teel, District Conservationist  
Jessica Taylor, Soil Conservationist  
Tracy Daily, Soil Conservation Tech.

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