

# Walla Walla County Conservation District

1501 Business One Circle, Suite 101 – Walla Walla, WA 99362-9526

Phone: (509) 522-6340, Ext. 3 – Fax: (509) 525-2811

Fall 2007

Published regularly to provide information to land users

Volume 9, Issue 2



## In this issue:

NEW! CURB  
Program

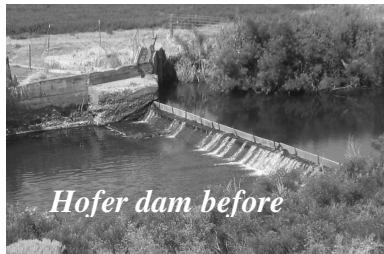
Screen Program  
Winding Down

EQIP Sign-up

Burning Issues

District Website

## Hofer Dam Completed, Piping Project Underway



*Hofer dam before*

The Hofer dam project, which many considered the most complex fish barrier in the watershed, has been completed. Most of the work was done last fall. After some minor modifications this spring the project is now operational. The completed system has a fish ladder and screens to protect fish at the intake. The crane lifts the screens for inspection and cleaning. Our project partners include the Touchet Eastside and Westside Irrigation Districts, with assistance from the CTUIR and Tri-State Steelheaders.



*Our Vision:* WWCCD believes that many complex environmental problems can be solved through voluntary cooperation rather than by regulatory mandates. We will do this by creating and then implementing proactive programs that respect both the needs of the landowners and the natural resources of the County.

The piping and the pump station projects have now begun, with work scheduled to start in early November. Miles of leaky open ditches will be replaced with 7 miles of buried pipeline, and a new pump station will be constructed. About 16 cfs will be placed into the state water trust. Trust water will be released at times determined to be the most critical for fish. The piping and pump station projects are funded by the Washington Conservation Commission Irrigation Efficiency Program and the Department Of Ecology. Funding for the Hofer dam was provided by the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board and the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council.



## CURB Program Launched

The goal of Creating Urban Riparian Buffers (CURB) is to improve water quality and riparian habitat on streams that flow through the urban centers of Walla Walla and College Place. This program will help homeowners restore the streams in their own backyards by planting a buffer of native grasses and shrubs. The buffers will be designed to be aesthetically pleasing and should need little to no maintenance once the plants are established.

There are endangered salmonids in the creeks running throughout the urban areas of Walla Walla. Yellowhawk Creek in particular is a primary migration corridor to the more pristine upper Mill Creek, while fingerlings

have been found in the myriad small creeks in town. The small springs that feed these creeks provide cool spots that salmonids seek out when temperatures soar in the summer. With endangered species using the water, it becomes even more important that the water quality be protected. But lawns are frequently a source of contamination. Run-off from lawns can carry excess lawn chemicals and other contaminants such as pet waste. Buffers protect water quality by slowing and absorbing this run-off. In time, the trees will provide shade to keep water temperatures low.



*Above: Project being planted. Prior to sod removal, the lawn went to the creek's edge, with virtually no shade.*



*Red Osier dogwoods, Pineleaf Penstemon, and native grasses have taken off after several weeks growth.*

The district has received an initial award from the Department of Ecology. With this grant, the district will provide landowners a buffer design suited to their property and cost-share to help cover the cost of the native plants and installation. Even those with homes a scant 30 feet from the creek can plant a buffer that will help protect water quality. Two pilot projects have been planted. One project demonstrates a site where structures and some mature trees provide shade, though the ground was effectively bare. The other site has virtually no shade so plants and native grasses needed to be tolerant of hot, dry conditions. Each site was planted with predominantly native shrubs and trees of varying heights, and demonstrates the attractive results that can be achieved with careful selection of plants that provide color and interest year-round. For example, the buffers included an abundance and diversity of perennial wild flowers, such as four different species of penstemon. Much of the seed stock was collected in the Blue Mountains, so it is expected that very little care will be needed to establish healthy, diverse, and attractive urban riparian buffers.

*Interested landowners should call to be placed on the waiting list while the District finalizes the grant with Ecology*

## ***EQIP Sign Up Open Now: Deadline Approaches***

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Washington announced the application deadline – **November 2** – for Washington producers interested in participating in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). According to NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, Dave Brown, the deadline is two weeks earlier than last year's, and has been moved up to help complete as many contracts as possible before the current programs expire under the existing Farm Bill. "In discussions with national, regional, and state leaders," Brown said, "we believe it would serve the people of Washington best by obligating any new EQIP funds as early in the fiscal year as possible. Therefore," he said, "producers will need to submit a completed application by November 2 to be considered in this round of EQIP contracting." Brown is urging producers to visit their local NRCS service center right away – and not to wait until the deadline to apply. "We will only be ranking those applications that are deemed 'eligible' in the FSA/NRCS database," he said. "If producers have out-dated or missing information in that database, it can take some time to make those changes or updates – so producers need to ensure their eligibility status is current." Brown said information on ranking questions, eligible practices lists, etc, will be available on the NRCS web site on October 8. "We will be focusing on conservation plan development with the highest ranking applications first in an attempt to complete plans as soon as possible," he said.

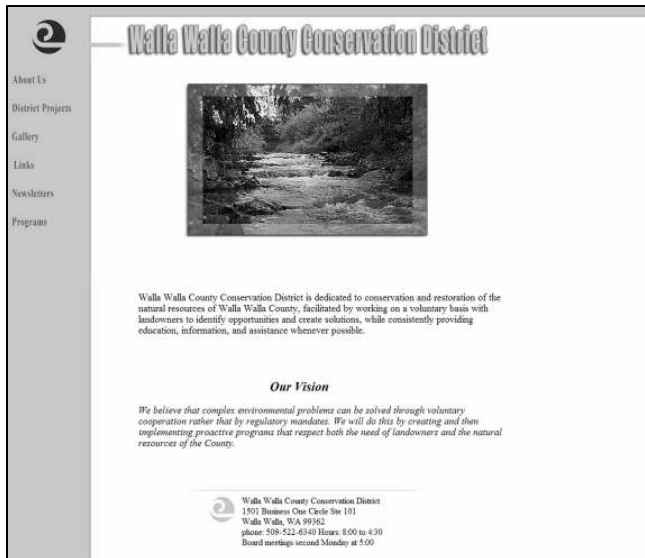
## **Screen Program Winding Down**

The fish screen program is winding down after some six years of diligent efforts and over 300 screens installed. The proactive response of irrigators in this valley has demonstrated that cooperative compliance is far more effective than regulatory mandates. After a season or two of use, producers came back to the district looking for assistance in making their screen systems a little more user friendly. For example, some found that the River Screen worked beautifully in shallow water without clogging or needing frequent cleaning. However, moving the screen from the river was not just challenging—it could be dangerous when the river rose. Others found that while a passive screen was fine during normal flows, they needed a different screen for the very low flow times, and a two-screen system seemed best. The district obtained a grant specifically for Screen Improvements from the Snake River Salmon Recovery board (funded by the State Recreation and Conservation Office) and has helped 5 landowners improve their systems. The District still has funding for new screen systems but these funds are going away next year. Anyone needing a screen should contact the district immediately, as the district will not have funds for new signups after February of 2008.

The meter program is funded until 2009.



*This boom system allows the irrigator to safely remove the screen for cleaning and storage. There is a CREP buffer in the background.*



### District Website

The new website will be launched October 29<sup>th</sup> at [www.wwccd.net](http://www.wwccd.net). This website will be continually updated, and features links to burn permit forms, a link to Ecology's daily burn call, and descriptions of new programs along with established ones. Take a look at some of the important work accomplished by your District.

### Burning Issues

The fall burn season is well under way with many good burn days so far. The Department of Ecology wants to remind folks that reporting your burn is a **requirement** now. Producers have seven days to report their burn by submitting the blue card or using the website.

If you use the website, which Ecology prefers, you can print a page to verify the acreage was reported. Those who fail to submit a burn report may be subject to fines from Ecology. Ecology also appreciates a phone call reporting the acres burned so they can clear your acres for the map and allow others to burn, but this call is not considered an official burn report.

The burn refund deadline is December 10<sup>th</sup>. If you decide not to burn, get your request in early. Late requests for refunds have been a continual problem for both the District and the County. Don't let it become your problem this year--apply early!

### Walla Walla County Conservation District Personnel

Pat McConnell, Chair  
Merrill Camp, Vice Chair  
Ed Chvatal, Secretary  
Todd Kimball, Treasurer  
Guy McCaw, Member

Rick Jones, District Manager  
Marguerite Daltoso, Admin. Asst  
Alison Bower, Project Coordinator.  
Audrey Ahmann, Grants Admin  
Greg Kinsinger, Project Coordinator  
Frank Lane, Burn Program  
Kay Mead, Civil Engineer Technician  
Mike Denny, CREP Coordinator  
Jeff Klundt, CREP Maintenance Technician  
Larry Hooker, Ag. Project Coordinator

NRCS:  
Ed Teel, District Conservationist  
Jim Loiland, Soil Con., NRCS

*Inside this Edition!*  
Hofer Dam  
Touchet Piping Project  
Equip Sign-up

Walla Walla County  
Conservation District  
1501 Business One Circle Ste 101  
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Non Profit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Walla Walla, WA  
99362  
Permit #197