

Walla Walla County Conservation District

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2009 WWCCD ANNUAL MEETING & SUPERVISOR ELECTION

January 28, 2010

8:00 to 12:00

Walla Walla Regional Airport Community Room

The Walla Walla County Conservation District will hold its 2010 Annual Meeting and Supervisor Election on Thursday, January 28th, 2010, at the Walla Walla Regional Airport in the Blue Mountain Community Meeting Room. Coffee and rolls will be available at registration beginning at 8:00 am. Chairman Ed Chvatal will call the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. This year we have applied for 2 pesticide credits for the morning's program. Guy McCaw has accepted his nomination for re-election to our board for a fifth 3-year term. Polls will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

Agenda (Subject to Change):

- 8:00 Sign in; Coffee & Rolls
- 8:00 Welcome, Introductions & Opening of Polls: Ed Chvatal, District Chair
- 8:45 Explanation of the Walla Walla Watershed Management Partnership Board: Cathy Schaeffer, Director, W2WMP
- 9:00 Status of the Walla Walla Water Management Initiative; Established Governance Board; Implication for Water Rights Changes in the Walla Walla Basin: Bill Neve
- 9:30 Infestation of Aquatic Weeds in the Walla Walla and lower Touchet Rivers—Methods of Control: Mike Denny, CREP Coordinator
- 9:50 Break: Vote if you haven't already done so!
- 10:00 WSDA 2010 Pesticide Update: Lee Bariger, WSDA, Prosser
- 11:00 Ag. Burn Program—Permitting, Controls: Paul Rossow, WA-DOE
- 11:30 Highly Erodible Lands—HEL Program: Ed Teel, NRCS
- 12:00 Polls close—Hosted Luncheon
- 12:00 Presentation of Awards: Ed Chvatal



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WWCCD SUPERVISOR ELECTION—YOUR VOTE IS IMPORTANT!

Your vote is important to help assure the WWCCD and other conservation districts maintain the current cost-effective election process. Don't forget to vote at the WWCCD Annual Meeting, Jan. 28th, 2009 at the Airport between 8 a.m. and noon!

Mark your calendar.

BRIDGING THE CREEKS

In a diverse agricultural county with many rivers and streams like Walla Walla, there is often the need to get farm equipment across the creek. There are only a couple of practical ways to accomplish this – over a bridge or fording the creek.

Ideally, bridges are the best way to cross streams and avoid detrimental impacts to ESA listed fish and water quality. The use of fords, while sometimes necessary and/or unavoidable in moving farm equipment, should be minimized if possible and eliminated by installing bridges where practical.

Why the seemingly sudden interest in bridging streams? The WWCCD has been approached by several landowners seeking financial and/or technical assistance to repair old deteriorating bridges so they will not have to maintain fords and drag equipment through the water. From the District standpoint, we strive to solve resource problems that have multiple benefits.

The District is not sure of the magnitude of the “bridge-ford” problem. Certainly, the District is not in the position to engineer and secure funding for bridges over major streams. However, the WWCCD does have the capacity to develop designs for crossings over smaller stream reaches and also to secure limited funding for bridge repair and/or replacement. If you have a specific need in this regard, give us a call at 522-6340.
By: Larry Hooker, Agricultural Projects Coordinator



Bridge support pre-construction



Bridge support post-construction

INVASION OF FALSE INDIGO BUSH ALONG THE TOUCHET RIVER, WALLA WALLA COUNTY

Invasion? You are correct when you say that this plant has been along the Touchet River, parts of the lower Walla Walla River and Mill Creek for years. What is the big deal anyway? For most landowners and folks fishing or drifting the Touchet River, the dense growth provided by False Indigo bush (*Amorpha fruticosa*) is hardly noticed until you attempt to walk through it or land on shore. Most will notice that where this plant grows there are no native trees or woody shrubs along the shoreline.



False Indigo bush on riverbanks

What type of plant is False Indigo? False Indigo bush is a legume and like most legumes it is able to fix atmospheric nitrogen in the soils in which it grows. Like most legumes it flowers in early June and attracts large numbers of native bees, beetles, wasps, moths and ants as pollinators. This plant produces upwards of 300,000 seed pods each holding two seeds per pod. This plant is considered a class B invasive weed species in the State of Washington. There are 13 other *Amorpha* species in this particular family of legumes spread across the United States with most as native species.

Where did this plant come from? False Indigo bush is native to the eastern seaboard south into the southeastern U.S. and as far west as Texas and north through the mid-west into southern North Dakota along the Mississippi River drainage. It is not native west of the Rocky Mountains. This species was introduced into western North America by several Federal agencies attempting to stabilize eroding stream and river banks. It was first reported as a problem from Washington in 1974 at Rooks Park, Walla Walla County. Well, its introduction worked and False Indigo bush has populated very well.

INVASION continued

Where is it found and how does it Spread? False Indigo bush is now the dominant plant along most of 24 miles of the Touchet River from its confluence with Walla Walla River to just east of Prescott. It is also the dominant plant along the Walla Walla River from Madam Dorion Park upstream to the Lowden-Gardena Bridge and beyond. There are also patches along Mill Creek. Expanding patches have been noted along the south shore of the Snake River from Burbank northeast to Central Ferry, Garfield County. The mystery of this plant is how it spreads upstream against the river's current. Because wild birds or other native wildlife do not seem to feed on this species of legume, no one has yet figured out how this plant's seeds move upstream. It may be fish in the river that transport these seeds upstream or it may be moved by some other common animal we know.

Are there any Biological Controls? One interesting side note about this plant: Up along the south shore of the Snake River this invasive plant is now being used and fed on by the American Beaver – something not observed among beaver here in the Walla Walla River basin. There are no known biological controls for this species according to USDA and APHIS. In the southeastern United States there is a fungus and a rust that have some ability to damage plants, but these organisms are not considered suitable sources of False Indigo bush control. The WWCCD has concluded that no viable biological control options are available for the Walla Walla Basin.

Do some science on your own; solve a mystery! With each mature plant producing upwards of 600,000 seeds a year, what local organism might be utilizing that mass of seeds for food? If you discover what animal feeds on this huge offering of food, please let the WWCCD staff know. Photograph the animal feeding on seed or write-up a good description of what you have observed and be sure to include the location, the date, the name of the observer(s) and how the animal/insect was feeding on and locating the seeds.

Why Control this Plant? False Indigo bush is invasive and easily out-competes most of the native woody shrubs in the Walla Walla River basin. This introduced species has dominated the shoreline growth zone from the waterline up a foot and a half or until the shoreline dries out. False Indigo grows so dense, requires so much space and creates such a tight canopy during the spring and summer that very little sun light reaches the river bank thus precluding the growth of any other plants. The WWCCD is extremely concerned about the loss of native plant diversity along the Touchet and other streams due to the spread of False Indigo. We are now looking at a mono-cultural growth along the Touchet River that has greatly altered the habitat diversity and also greatly reduced the diversity of native birds and wildlife. This invasive weed has also closed off most of the Touchet River to access by landowners and fishermen. False Indigo bush is not a great food source for native wildlife and does not allow new trees to grow. The soils become nitrogen saturated or acidified which sharply decreases what native species of plants can grow on these sites should a space open up. The lack of native trees along the Touchet River also contributes to higher water temperatures during the summer months. This is a TMDL issue for the Touchet River and an important limiting factor for ESA listed Steelhead trout and reintroduced Spring Chinook Salmon.

What works on controlling this invader? Shade is the primary factor that works in controlling False Indigo bush. Planting native trees along the west and north facing shorelines will allow landowners to greatly reduce the vitality and growth of this non-native invader. The other method of control is to cut off the green seed heads in early August, allow re-growth and spray the plant in mid-September as the False Indigo begins to slip into dormancy. At this time, the plant will pull the herbicide down into the roots and kill the plant. This plant is greatly affected by length of day light and as the daylight shortens it begins to go into dormancy. Therefore, planting native trees to shade out any potential False Indigo bush from once again gaining root in treated areas is a key element for successful control.

WWCCD Touchet River False Indigo Removal Project! Pending funding approval, the WWCCD will be starting a False Indigo removal project the fall of 2010 east of Prescott along the Touchet River in an effort to stop the upstream spread of this plant. Any landowners that wish to have further information or to participate in this project please contact Mike Denny at 509-522-6340 ext. 114. *By: Mike Denny, Riparian Project Coordinator.*



False Indigo bush—a prolific seed producer!

CONGRATULATIONS TO PAM CONOVER, WACD'S 2009 CONSERVATION TEACHER-OF-THE-YEAR

Pam Conover, a 5th grade science teacher at the Waitsburg Elementary School, was nominated by the Walla Walla County Conservation District for the WACD (Washington Association of Conservation Districts) Science Teacher of the Year award way back in early July. This nomination went forward with outstanding assistance from Waitsburg School District Superintendent Dr. Clark and several of Pam's peers. So it is with great honor that the WWCCD has the opportunity to announce that Pam Conover was selected as the recipient of the **Conservation Teacher of the Year 2009** by the WACD Board of Directors. It is because of Pam's huge investment in her students and her outstanding conservation ethic in teaching science to hundreds of students over her 32 years in the Waitsburg School District that she was selected for this honor. She was selected from hundreds of elementary school science teachers from across Washington. Pam is professional, motivated and above all determined that each and every one of her students has the opportunity to learn under her attention. Pam has made long term impressions on many of her students, thus laying the foundation for success in their adult lives. Pam's award was announced the evening of November 12th during the Waitsburg School Board meeting in Preston Hall by WWCCD Board supervisor Guy McCaw and WWCCD staff member Mike Denny. Pam was presented a certificate of congratulations from the Walla Walla County Conservation District. Her selection was announced at the Awards Banquet in Spokane on December 2nd, 2009 at the Mirabeau Park Hotel & Convention Center at which time Pam received her formal award and recognition from the WACD Director John Larson. Congratulations are due to this very dedicated science teacher and her great conservation ethic. Well done Pam!

Walla Walla County Conservation District

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Todd Kimball, Treasurer
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Jeff Schulke, Member

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NRCS Staff

Ed Teel, District Conservationist
Jessica Taylor, Soil Conservationist

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