

# Walla Walla County Conservation District NEWSLETTER

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## NRCS Staff Addition



United States Department of Agriculture

### Natural Resources Conservation Service

Bryce Krueger joined the Walla Walla NRCS office just after Memorial Day . He earned a Natural Resources degree with an emphasis in Wildlife from WSU. Later he received his Master's Degree in Wildlife Science from New Mexico State University.

He put those skills to use conducting ecological studies in Kenya and working for the Wyoming Dept. of Game & Fish before joining the NRCS Waterville office in 2010. He is an avid outdoorsman who grew up in both Oregon on a Centennial Farm and Washington. He and his family are grateful to be closer to their family in the greater Blue Mountain area.

Stop by the NRCS office and visit Bryce to share snowmobiling stories or learn about the current EQIP programs.

## Summer Summary

The bustle of spring turned into the sprint of summer. Below are a few highlights of District activities.

- Addressed bank instability on Mill Creek  
Installed one project (photo below),  
Assisted with permitting on another,  
Provided designs for a third,  
Provided technical assistance and are seeking funds to reduce impacts from flood hazards on a fourth.
- Assessed 386 acres of CREP plus new sites
- Developed 6-7 grant applications  
The District is solely supported by grants and we do not receive a tax allocation. Each year members of the community express their needs and we search for ways to help.
- Volunteered at the BioBlitz nature awareness event in June
- Hosted a booth during the Walla Walla County Fair promoting the Voluntary Stewardship Program
- Installed a series of log structures for a restoration project on the Touchet River (see article on page 2)
- Concluded and analyzed soil health tests (see article on page 3)
- And much more...



Bank Erosion project on Mill Creek



## Spotlight: Fish & Wildlife Habitat –Stream Resto- ration

While strides are being made in restoring salmonid populations, we still have a way to go before reaching historical numbers. With a lot of hard work, populations are making their way to recovery. Here in the inland Northwest, we are making a difference. Forest riparian buffers planted under the CREP program in the early 2000s are now shading creeks. These buffers help keep waters cool while slowing overland flow that can deliver sediment to the rivers. Restoration efforts like installing and maintaining fish screens, removing fish passage barriers and restoring streams all contribute to helping restore salmon populations to sustainable levels.



The McCaw Phase B Restoration project was constructed this summer. It involved over 10 years of development obtaining funds and constructing the project in multiple phases. It took 5 grant applications before two were successful and funded Phase B of the project. Result: Twenty-nine habitat structures in the Touchet River to help endangered fish species.

### Total Structures and Materials:

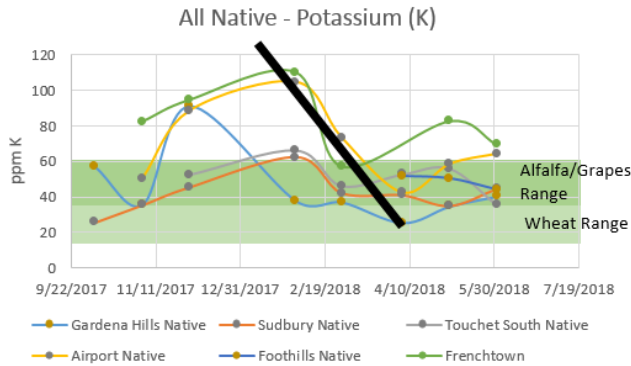
- 7 Bank Large Woody Debris (LWD) 65+ logs
- 1 Channel Spanning-150' 45+ logs
- 2 Bank LWD 10+ logs
- 2 Bank Engineered Log Jams (ELJ) 24 logs
- 1 Box ELJ 14 logs
- 10 Barb ELJ/LWD 80 logs
- 6 Tri-structures 28 logs

Additional plantings will occur in November on the McCaw and others sites. We could use volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering a few hours, please contact us at the office 509-956-3777.

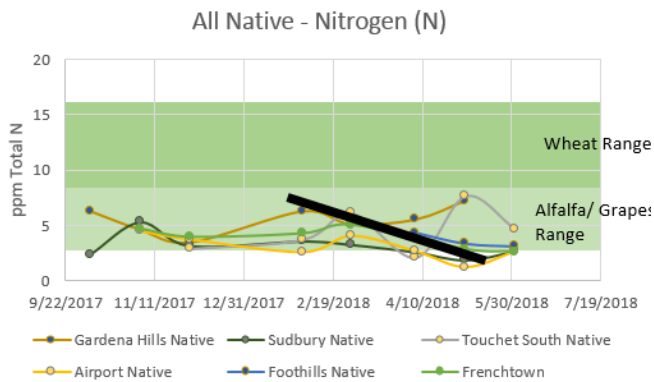


## Soil Health

With profit margins diminishing and falling yields, sustaining the health of our soils is vital. Through a Washington [Soil Health Committee](#) grant, we collected soil samples monthly on a few farms supporting the 4R (right fertilizer, right rate, right time, right place) principles for nutrient management to find how much fertilizer is actually available to the plants. Can we reduce our fertilizer use, increase soil biota and have robust yields? Most wheat crop soil samples indicated low Boron and Zinc levels. Looking at macronutrients, there was a steep depletion of Potassium in the spring. Depletions rates were not as drastic for Nitrogen or Phosphorus.



**Graphs** Showing Native Potassium (above) and Nitrogen (below) levels detected by UNIBEST Ag Manager™ Resin Capsules.



Timing of application, not quantity, seems to be an area for improvement. Higher application rates in the fall may not be as effective as split or multiple split application rates. Consult with your agronomist—there is always more to learn.

Soil sampling at dawn. Samples adjacent to fields provided a control for each plot



This year people asked the District about crop diversification and changing agriculture demands. In response to those comments, district staff have been working to find resources in these areas.

The USDA has awarded Blue Mountain Action Council (BMAC) a grant for an 18-month study about creating a food hub to aggregate, store, process, and distribute locally-produced agricultural products to consumers in the greater Walla Walla Valley. WWCCD is one of the partners working together with BMAC on this study.

The Cascadia Grains Conference, by WSU's Food Systems Program, may host a two day conference on the east side of the state in 2019 following a successful meeting in Pullman. On August 20th nearly a hundred enthusiastic growers, maltsters, bakers, processors and researchers joined together to discuss the biggest hurdles standing in the way of revitalizing a regional grain economy.

The market for specialty grains is growing. There is building demand for malt with unique flavor and character coming from regional breweries and distillers. Cascadia Grains is connecting people representing different segments of the value chain to work to find solutions, often through public-private partnerships.

Creating markets and infrastructure for processing and storage of alternative crops can be a motivating factor in implementing crop rotations. Diversification of crops is a strategy to deal with heavy weed pressure. Crop rotations can have a positive effect on soil health, improve water retention, increase wheat straw residue, and lead to greater yields in winter wheat crops.

Jerry Robinson with [Washington State Crop Improvement Association](#) shared that a food grade winter pea is being developed with high yields. A limited release to growers is anticipated either fall 2019 or 2020. There may be a demand for high amylose wheat but it is uncertain if trials will start in the Dakotas or Palouse region. More details to follow.

## WWCCD Staff Changes

The District had two interns this past summer: Robert & Eric. Robert Fowler helped with GIS mapping and statistical analysis. Robert headed off to new adventures in August and we thank him for his expertise and patience in helping staff develop better maps and GIS data.

Eric Rannestad joined us in August after graduating from Whitman College last Spring. He received degrees in Art and Economics and, over the past few years, has grown increasingly interested in natural resource management and conservation work.

Eric joins us after helping the Oregon Nature Conservancy in their rangeland restoration projects last year and researching the native seed industry. Since he arrived in August, Eric has been helping with our summer restoration projects as well as the development of new education materials to explain the Voluntary Stewardship Program.



### Walla Walla County Conservation District

#### District Staff

Renee Hadley, District Manager  
Audrey Ahmann, Assistant Manager: Finance  
Jeff Klundt, Burn Permit Coordinator  
Lisa Stearns, Civil Engineering Technician  
Joanna Cowles Cleveland, CREP Scientist  
Lynda Oosterhuis, Conservation Technician  
Lance Horning, District Engineer  
Eric Rannestad, Media Intern

#### WWCCD Board of Supervisors

Pat McConnell  
Jim Kent  
Todd Kimball  
Jeff Schulke  
Ed Chvatal  
Associate Mike Hagerman  
Associate Annie Byerley  
Associate Nick Plucker

[www.wwccd.net](http://www.wwccd.net)

### Our USDA SERVICE CENTER partners

#### NRCS Staff

Ed Teel, District Conservationist  
Katy Walters, Program Support  
Bryce Krueger, Resource Conservationist

#### WDFW Staff

Sean Taylor, Fish Passage & Screening Biologist

#### FSA Staff

Kelley Betts, Co. Executive Director  
Nicole Armijo, Program Technician  
Norma Colunga, Program Technician

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