

Walla Walla County Conservation District

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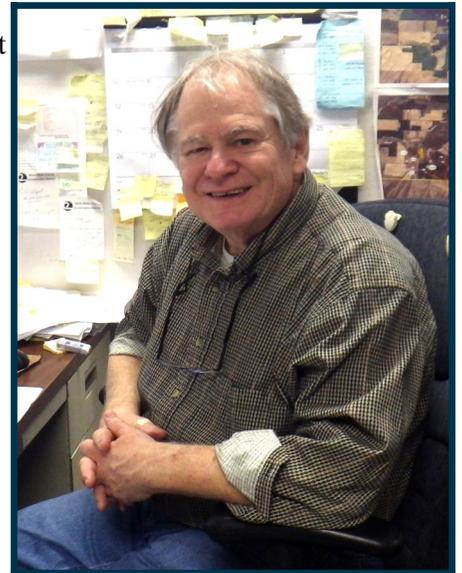
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SAVE THE DATE: WWCCD ANNUAL MEETING THURSDAY JANUARY 18, 2018

Pesticide credits will be offered. Watch your mailbox for the complete agenda to be sent in a few weeks!

A Legacy is Leaving: Greg Kinsinger is retiring

After over 12 years of service to the Conservation District, Greg Kinsinger is retiring at the end of the year. Greg actually began working for the district as a student in the WW Community College Water Management program assisting on the fish screen, water meter and irrigation efficiency projects under the direction of Greg Farrens and Jerry Anhorn. Hired in 2005, with his excellent background and hands on experience, he quickly established himself as a key member of the District team and assumed a leadership role in the fledgling screen and meter programs. The early years of these programs weren't always smooth, with inevitable tension between Walla Walla basin irrigators and the federal and state agencies threatening action under the Endangered Species Act. Greg was uniquely suited for finding the middle ground and designing projects that met the needs of landowners and the requirements of the funding agencies. Greg was instrumental at fine-tuning the process, following through, and resolving concerns. He did whatever it took to get projects on the ground. His expertise was well-known in the conservation community and he mentored many interns, sharing both technical know-how and his knack for getting people to come to the table. In 2014 he received the Washington State Conservation District Employee of the Year award for his work in Walla Walla and with other districts.



Greg's understanding of the needs of irrigators and natural resource issues made him an effective landowner advocate in forums like the Mill Creek Work Group and the WW Watershed Management Partnership. His perseverance and work ethic are proven by his accomplishments, which are too many to list but include the following:

- ◆ Designing & installing over 400 fish screens and 500 flow meters
- ◆ Designing and installing fish screens on major sites including Garrison Creek, Blalock, Titus Creek, the Klicker Diversion, and more recently the Monson/Cox screens on the Snake River
- ◆ Managing construction of the multi-million dollar GFID Piping Projects, transforming farming on the Gardena bench while returning a significant amount of saved water to the Walla Walla River

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Voluntary Stewardship Program Update: The VSP Work Plan was submitted, reviewed and approved by the State. Hurrah! It is now time to start implementing that VSP plan. It starts with 1) assessing your land to determine if critical areas overlap your land, 2) followed by a summary of what you are already doing to protect those critical areas and 3) identify if additional protection of critical areas. *Check out our [website](#) for more information.*

VSP Spotlight on Critical Areas: Streams can be *Cheap & Cheerful*

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Areas are one of the critical areas that farmers and ranchers need to protect under the Growth Management Act. As we discussed in our last issue, CRP grasslands can offer wildlife habitat and protect soils from erosion. Streams and adjacent land include a variety of critical areas. Right now, how you protect those critical areas is your call. The Voluntary Stewardship program offers farmer and ranchers a chance to voluntarily protect those critical areas without government mandates.



In mid-September, three WWCCD staff attended a *Cheap and Cheerful* Workshop in Dayton to learn about alternative approaches to stream restoration. Large woody debris structures (LWD) are commonly used in the restoration of streams and rivers by placing artificial log jams in the waterway to redirect flows, control erosion, create better fish habitat and begin the process of reconnecting the river with its floodplains and riparian areas. These projects are often very expensive and rely heavily on engineers, designers and heavy equipment to create LWD structures that will not break loose and cause damage to infrastructure downstream. The main idea behind the *Cheap and Cheerful* approach is using low tech structures at a high density, up to 72 structures per river mile. These log and twig structures are used to give the river what it needs to begin to repair itself as many rivers and creeks no longer have trees or shrubs on the banks to naturally provide this woody material.

The two structures most used in this low tech approach are Post Assisted Log Structures (PALS) and Beaver Dam Analogs (BDA). These are simple structures made of several large branches and some smaller branches and twigs, held in place with untreated wood posts that are driven into the stream bed. Both PALS and BDAS are fairly cheap, approximately \$100 per structure (including labor) and can be installed by a crew of 2-4 people in just a few hours. They can be installed in fairly remote areas with only hand tools and a hydraulic post pounder. These structures slow down water, capture snowmelt and sediment, collect it in ponds and allow the streams to connect with the floodplain, while providing habitat for fish, birds and all sorts of aquatic life, as well as maintaining better stream flow during the dry season.

Part of the workshop included field trips, getting us into the stream and taking part in building some structures. In a couple of hours, the group of roughly 20 participants had built 4 new structures and could see the change in water flow immediately. This workshop provided insight to an alternative approach to stream restoration and we hope to find areas in Walla Walla County to do our own trials in “Cheap and Cheerful” stream restoration. Contact us if you are interested! 509-522-6340 ext. 5.

Call for Rainfall Collectors

Would you like to help your community? Help us with an important task? Get a **free** rainfall gauge? You can do all of these things by signing up to collect rainfall data.

This is important to our community because all sorts of people use the data (Farmers, Real Estate, researchers, etc.). It is important to know rainfall information but the district can't do it without your participation. We need YOUR help. We'll provide you with a FREE rainfall gauge and a pre-stamped card to return to us every year. The rain fall information is available in our office and also posted to our website at <http://www.wvccd.net/>. For more details on this great opportunity call Lisa Stearns at the District (509)522-6340 ext 116.



Your Land, Your Legacy: Blue Mountain Land Trust Partners with Landowners

Most farmers and ranchers are deeply immersed in the future of their land. How can it stay productive? Who will own it after them? How can they keep their land in the family? Since its founding in 1999, the Blue Mountain Land Trust has been working with landowners in Walla Walla County to answer these questions.

The Blue Mountain Land Trust is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization dedicated to securing the future of natural and agricultural resources in southeastern Washington and northeastern Oregon through voluntary partnerships with landowners. Throughout this area, BMLT has protected twelve properties totaling approximately 4,000 acres. In Walla Walla County, BMLT has helped five landowners conserve almost 600 acres.

A conservation easement is the most common tool BMLT uses to protect farm properties from development or division. This type of easement is a voluntary agreement between the landowner and the land trust regarding the property's future use. Usually, the agreement will prevent the subdivision or development of the land to ensure its continued use for agricultural production. An easement may also preserve sensitive wetland or habitat areas. Each easement is unique and is designed to achieve the landowner's individual goals for his/her property.

A common myth about conservation easements on agricultural land is they prohibit farming or ranching. That's almost always not true and in any case, is entirely up to the landowner as this is a voluntary program. The great majority of conservation easements **protect the right to farm and graze** the properties, not restrict them.

Many landowners choose to donate conservation easements and receive the tax incentives provided for qualified charitable gifts. In some cases, BMLT purchases easements, compensating the landowners for the extinguished development rights.

Conservation easements can be a powerful tool for securing the future of farms and ranches. A well-designed conservation easement can also help with estate planning and farm succession. As part of a comprehensive estate plan, it can keep farm and ranch land in a family while equitably providing for family members who have left the farm.



To learn more about conservation easements and other ways to secure the future of agricultural land, please contact Jason Bulay, BMLT's Conservation Director at (509) 525-3136 or email him at jason@bmlt.org.

A booklet on farm conservation easements title "Your Land, Your Legacy" is available online at bmlt.org. >
Conservation > Landowner's Booklet.



Greg and landowner at Titus Creek

(Greg Kinsinger's accomplishments continued from pg.1)

- ◆ Conceptualizing and bringing the Stiller/Schwenke Aquifer Recharge project to fruition, which remains the sole aquifer recharge project in Walla Walla County
- ◆ Overcoming a multitude of obstacles to help a landowner install the Gaily Bridge over the Touchet River
- ◆ Working with Benton CD, Columbia CD, Okanogan CD and others to develop their screen & restoration programs

It goes without saying that Greg's friendly demeanor and hard work will be missed by area landowners. Cards and well wishes will be appreciated through December 15th, when an open house will be held at the District office. Plan to stop by and join us for a slice of cake and some good reminiscing!

*As Greg would write at the end of his board reports:
"Sorry y'all—there ain't no more!"*

Thinking about Christmas Shopping? Time for Burn Refunds, too.

If you need a refund for the 2017 Fall Field Burn season, your request must be submitted to the WWCCD by **12/15/2017**. Refund request forms are available at the WWCCD office. Refund checks will be sent from Walla Walla County in January 2018. No refunds will be issued for less than \$25.00 per WAC 173-430-041 (7)(b).

Post Burn Reporting is a **MANDATORY PERMIT CONDITION**, preferably using the Washington Department of Ecology website http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/aginfo/Blue_card.html or the Blue Cards sent with the burn permit. Reporting online allows Washington Department of Ecology to instantly remove your acres from the list and helps your neighbors waiting for a metered burn day.



Defend, Discuss, Define were hot topics during the November Burn Task Force meeting in Spokane. There is a time and place to burn or not to burn. Speakers said it is increasingly important for producers to understand the 3-D's.

- Defend:** Provide clear reasons why you are using ag burning as a management tool. This includes both in the detailed descriptions on your burn applications and in your discussions with members of the public.
- Discuss:** Be prepared. The general population is becoming more distant from agriculture. As complaints arise, you need to be able to educate folks about your operation while respecting their concerns. Explain how farm operations have transitioned to use non-burn management tools, and the effect on erosion, plant disease and weeds if burning wasn't allowed.
- Define:** The Ag Burn Program has become state-of-the-art through the use of computer modeling, input from users, coordination with multiple state agencies, and review of concerns and air quality management through the quarterly Burn Task Force meetings. Public perceptions are changing, but so have ag operations and air quality management related to ag burns.

Let's be ready to share how management of your farm protects the environment and contributes to food for all of us.

Walla Walla County Conservation District

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