

Walla Walla County Conservation District NEWSLETTER

Summer 2018
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In this issue

- Upcoming Events
- Spring Summary
- VSP Spotlight on CARA
- CRP Renewal & Resource
- Funding Hiatus
- VSP: Time to get started!
- Welcome interns
- Ag Burn Permit

Upcoming Events

- June 20 Crop Tours
1 p.m. [Cereal Grains](#) &
5 p.m. [Canola](#)
- Summer Construction: The District will lead construction of two restoration projects, one on Mill Creek and the other on the Touchet River. Both have been in the works for several years and we are looking forward to construction. Stay tuned for details.

Spring Summary

Spring has been busy for District staff! In February we visited the 2nd grade classrooms at Columbia Elementary to teach about habitats, soils and the part we play in our surroundings. District staff followed up again in April by attending their Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEAM) Night.

In May we attended the Make-A-Splash event (shown below) and the Return to the River Salmon Festival at the Walla Walla Community College. These events provided a great way to highlight soil properties, show impacts of erosion and give these students and the community exposure to the field of conservation.

Spring also created a flurry of activity as the District continued work on CREP contracts, re-enrollments, fish screens and flow meters. Thanks for your patience as we work our way through projects.



Students gather at the start of the Make-a-Splash event at the Walla Walla Community College.



Spotlight:

Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas -Water Quantity component

Walla Walla County has 5 critical area groups, encompassing 10 sub areas, that farmers and ranchers need to protect under the Growth Management Act. Right now, how you protect those critical areas is your call. The Voluntary Stewardship program offers farmers and ranchers the opportunity to continue voluntary efforts to protect those critical areas without government mandates. In previous issues, we discussed Fish & Wildlife Habitat areas and the quality component of Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARA). As summer heats up let's discuss water use.

A water meter serves many purposes, including increased irrigation efficiency. The meter can be used to fine-tune your water usage to meet the immediate needs of the crop in production. Meters accurately measure water usage for reporting to Ecology. Further, the meter records will help in proving your water rights, should they ever come into question.

NRCS programs like EQIP can also help improve irrigation efficiency. The Local Work Group has recently updated their funding pools and expanded options. Consider talking to NRCS about updating your system to increase efficiency. While you are at it, come talk to the district so that the improvements can be counted in our county-wide efforts to demonstrate that voluntary conservation measures are an effective way to protect natural resources. Remember, the goal of VSP is to avoid regu-



lation down the road by proving that resource conservation is best achieved through voluntary efforts.

The average household uses 5 times more water during the summer months!

Walla Walla homeowners also need to pitch in to protect water quantity.

Outdoor tips:

- ◆ Water at night. (Watering during the day uses 30% more water!)
- ◆ Water weekly instead of lightly every day for deep root growth.
- ◆ Consider converting part of your landscape to Xeriscaping. Select drought tolerant plants to substitute for lawn areas. There are examples at the WWCC Water & Environment Center and at the Xeriscape Park at 607 Isaacs in WW. The Walla Walla WSU Extension office has Xeriscape guides and tips.
- ◆ Install drip irrigation to increase efficiency and decrease evaporation in gardens and flowerbeds.
- ◆ Mulch landscape areas. This retains moisture and suppresses weeds. Just don't place yard waste mulch on stream banks. It can suppress growth and create bare patches-which can lead to more erosion in the winter.
- ◆ Install adjustable, efficient lawn sprinklers to avoid runoff and over-watering.

Indoor tips:

- ◆ Check your pipes for any possible leaks.
- ◆ Install faucet aerators.
- ◆ Turn the faucet off when not actively using water, like when brushing teeth.

To learn more about how to protect the Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas, contact us at the district office.



Established CRP



CRP RENEWAL STATUS

The USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently announced it is holding a continuous signup period for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), running from **June 4, 2018 to August 17, 2018**. This is a narrow window. The FSA office is still short staffed and will need time to answer questions and develop contracts.

RESOURCE for EXPIRING CRP

Converting several years worth of CRP ground into production ground may be a challenge. The North Dakota State University prepared some tips. They advise producers to consider the following: residue, weed control, and soil moisture. For example, "In the fall, soils in CRP ground generally have very low levels of stored moisture because the established plants have been extracting water actively from the soil during the growing season."

Here is the link to the North Dakota information:

<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/crops/bringing-land-in-the-conservation-reserve-program-back-into-crop-production-or-grazing>



Examples of Flow Meters installed through the District

SCREEN/METER FUNDING ENDED

For over a decade, the District provided cost-share assistance for flow meters and fish screens. With your participation, over 469 flow meters and 391 fish screens were installed. Funding for these programs has ended but we continue to seek funding for new projects. Thank you for your dedication to conservation which made our program one of the most successful in the state. **If you need a screen or meter, please come talk to Lynda. It is MUCH easier to obtain grants when we have a waiting list of willing landowners.** It is a hard fact but the obligation to screen diversions and protect endangered fish species is still in effect, regardless of the availability of cost share assistance.



Time to get started! Walla Walla County VSP needs to record statistics on a county wide basis, not by farm. It doesn't take much time to participate in VSP and it's easy.

1. Fill out a 4 page checklist (5 to 10 minutes) and
2. Complete a field visit with District staff (1-2 hours)
3. **If we can squeeze a field check into your schedule before harvest, then the District staff can take care of the paperwork during the summer.** After we complete some paperwork, the last step includes reviewing our observations and the info you provided, then finding what might be available to help you address resource concerns and/or transition to new practices.

Check out our [website](#) for more information.

AGRICULTURAL BURN PERMITTING

Refund requests for the 2018 Spring Field Burn or Pile Burn season must be submitted to the WWCCD by 6/15/2018; we hope you aren't late! Refund checks will be sent from Walla Walla County in July 2018*.

Agricultural burn permitting has gone down significantly this year compared to the past decade. Changes in residue management, vertical tilling and baling (mostly for the straw plant) are contributing to less burning.

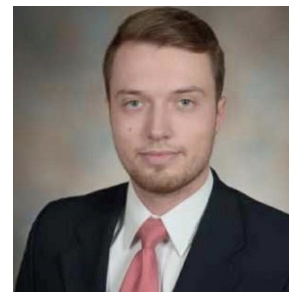
For additional information on research regarding alternatives to ag burning and air quality see the [Agricultural Burn Task Force](#) website including the [Alternatives for Managing Wheat](#) study.

*No refunds will be issued for less than \$25.00 per WAC 173-430-041(7)(b).

WELCOME INTERNS!

The District will have two new interns this summer: Robert Fowler and Eric Rannestad. Eric will be joining us in August. Details about Eric will be in our next newsletter.

Robert recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science with minors in Mathematics and Geospatial Analysis from WSU. He grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area but attended high school here in Washington State. In his free time Robert likes to hike and camp. He has participated in many conservation efforts in Eastern Washington and is dedicated to the conservation and restoration of natural resources. Robert hopes to make a difference in this community as he helps the District with all things GIS and statistical analysis.



Walla Walla County Conservation District

District Staff

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View the WWCCD website at
www.wwccd.net

Our USDA SERVICE CENTER partners

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