

Kittitas County Conservation District

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Landowners in
Kittitas County
Since 1942*



Volume XIII Issue I

Members of State Conservation Commission Tour Water Conservation Projects in Kittitas Valley

Distributed by the Washington State Conservation Commission

ELLENSBURG, WA – Days after the statewide drought announcement, Kittitas County Conservation District (KCCD) took a group of local, state, federal, and tribal partners on a tour that showcased water conservation projects in Kittitas Valley.

The tour took place on May 19 and was part of the bi-monthly meeting of the Washington State Conservation Commission—the coordinating state agency for all conservation districts in Washington. This was the first time since 2006 that KCCD hosted the Conservation Commission tour.

KCCD led the group to sites along Manastash Creek where the District has been a lead partner in efforts to restore habitat for Mid-Columbia Summer Steelhead, including completing projects that enhance streamflow. Thanks to financial and on-the-ground assistance provided by KCCD, five landowners who divert water from Manastash Creek have converted 651 acres from rill irrigation to more water-efficient sprinkler irrigation systems, and the Manastash Water Ditch Association has converted a mile of earthen irrigation ditch to a pressurized pipeline, all in the last five years. The Kittitas Reclamation District (KRD), whose canal flows through the watershed, also converted earthen delivery ditches to pipelines and committed to spill water for instream flow in the creek. Concurrent with conservation projects, Trout Unlimited's Washington Water Project acquired water from another six water right holders on the creek. Together these efforts have reduced diversions from Manastash Creek and placed thousands of acre-feet of water in the Trust Water Rights program for instream flow in perpetuity.

While Manastash Creek has a history of running dry in the summer, the recently completed projects constructed by both the KCCD and the KRD in 2013-2014 resulted in flows nearly all of last summer, said Anna Lael, KCCD manager. Unfortunately, circumstances are different in 2015

(continued page 2)



Justin Bezold (Trout Unlimited – Washington Water Project), Sherry Swanson and Anna Lael explain the Manastash Creek Restoration Project



Dist. Manager Anna Lael talks about sprinkler conversion projects and the ongoing need for funding to address KCCD's list of potential projects encompassing 4,000 acres in the Kittitas Valley.

(continued from page 1) "Drought conditions are going to really be felt here at Manastash Creek," said Lael. "The creek will be dewatered this summer due to the drought."

With the 2015 drought and subsequent years of recovery looming, KCCD sees water conservation measures, such as sprinkler conversions, as very important projects for all of the Kittitas Valley. Sprinkler irrigation conversions build drought resiliency by reducing demand on irrigation water, while also reducing the amount of sediment and pollutants that flow off fields into nearby waterways. Across the district, the urgency to complete sprinkler conversion projects has steadily increased in the last few years. In the last two years, the KCCD assisted 12 landowners with sprinkler conversion projects, but the list of interested landowners continues to grow. The KCCD now has dozens more landowners and 4,000 acres on a wait list for funding. "Not a week goes by that one of those landowners doesn't stop by the office to ask me about the status of potential funding," said Lael.

KCCD's cooperative approach to water conservation will become increasingly important as the state deals with broad natural resource challenges like this year's drought, said Mark Clark, executive director of the Conservation Commission.

"The demand for large-scale water conservation projects is rising, and those projects are going to require strong working relationships between private, public, and tribal stakeholders in order to be successful," said Clark. "Fortunately, Kittitas County Conservation District already has been establishing and maintaining those relationships for years, which was evident from the long list of partners involved on the projects we saw on the tour today."

Early Application cut-off date for EQIP statewide initiatives

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service announced on June 16th that the application deadline for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program in Washington State would come earlier than previous years to account for a stronger focus on conservation planning. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program is a voluntary, technical and financial assistance program designed to help farmers improve irrigation efficiency; manage nutrient run-off and/or animal waste; improve the health of native plant communities; and reduce soil loss.

Eligible producers and entities interested will have until July 17 to submit their applications for consideration in fiscal year 2016. Producers should also expect to work with NRCS to write a personalized conservation plan prior to funding obligation. Conservation plans are free to producers and identify potential natural resource problems, evaluate alternatives, and recommend solutions that could make use of the land more effective and sustainable. Contact: Erin Kreutz at the Ellensburg office 925-8585 ext. 3 or 2211 W Dolarway Rd., Suite 6.

Kittitas County Conservation District Board of Supervisors

Mark Moore - Chair (Elected - term expires in 2016)
Lynn Brown - Vice Chair (Appointed - term expires in 2017)
Jeff Brunson - Auditor (Elected - term expires in 2018)
Bill Boyum - Member (Appointed - term expires in 2016)
Ron Gibb - Member (Elected - term expires in 2017)

District Staff

Anna Lael - District Manager
Sara Leist - Financial Manager
Suzanne Wade - GIS Specialist
Mark Crowley - Resource Technician II
Ryan Roberts - District Engineer
Sherry Swanson - Project Manager
Brent Dixon - Resource Technician

Board meetings are generally held on the second Thursday of each month. The schedule for the year:

July	7:00 AM
August	7:00 AM
September	7:00 AM
October	7:00 AM
November	1:00 PM
December	1:00 PM

Meeting notices are also posted on the KCCD web page and at the KCCD office. Additional special meetings are occasionally held throughout the year. For more information or to receive e-mail notifications of meetings, contact Anna or Sara at 925-3352 or sara-leist@conserveva.net.

Another Successful Plant Sale

The 18th Annual Roy & Marge Bach Memorial Conservation Plant Sale was a great success! We filled nearly 70 orders (including preorders and walk-ins) with over 3,000 trees and shrubs. A big thank you to our volunteers (Darlene Carlton, Dottie Zufelt and the Master Gardeners).

Each year, hundreds of elementary school students across Kittitas County benefit from the proceeds of the Plant Sale. The proceeds are used to fund activities from planting trees and shrubs on school property, to buying science kits, to field trips highlighting local and regional natural resources. Over the years, funds have been provided to individual teachers and classes as well as for other broader groups. This year approved applications included the travel expenses for the Elementary Agriculture Appreciation Day, teaching 3rd grade students about agriculture and food production in the valley and a project by the Kittitas County Cattlewomen to buy books to donate to all local elementary school libraries. The book is called "Water – Sources and Uses in Conservation" by Nancy Carlson. Contact Sara



WSSC crew members sort plants and fill orders for customers.

509 925-3352 ext 201 if you are an educator and want to learn more about applying for a grant.

The KCCD named the plant sale in honor of Roy & Marge Bach. Roy was an avid outdoorsman and friend of the KCCD. Marge was the KCCD secretary for 30 years, retiring in 2000. After Marge's retirement, she continued to volunteer each year to help with the plant sale. The KCCD continues to receive donations in their honor to the Plant Sale fund.



Newsletter to be Electronically Delivered

Our Conservation District will be transitioning to an electronic version of the newsletter in the near future. Please visit us on our website KCCD.net and give us your email on our "Contact" page. Put in the comment box that you'd like to keep receiving the newsletter. As always, copies of the newsletter are also on our website.

 Visit KCCD on the web at kccd.net

Conservation District Board of Supervisors Declare a Drought Emergency

The Board of Supervisors for the Kittitas County Conservation District (KCCD) passed Resolution 2015-001 on May 14, declaring a drought emergency. This followed similar declarations by Governor Inslee in March and the Kittitas County Board of Commissioners in May 2015. All three declarations cite record-low snow pack and water supply conditions leading to adverse environmental, economic, and social impacts.

In part, the KCCD's Resolution reads "The Kittitas County Conservation District Board of Supervisors have determined that drought conditions will result in water shortages for agricultural production, increased wildland fire potential, and degraded habitat for fish and wildlife. The Board of Supervisors has further determined that efforts to promote conservation practices must be accelerated through careful planning and implementation in order to mitigate the drought impacts and to improve future drought resiliency for the community."

The KCCD worked with Kittitas County in 2010 when the Kittitas County Hazard Mitigation Plan was completed. Drought is a listed hazard in that plan and the KCCD is identified as a partner to the County in completing a Drought Response Plan. To that end, the KCCD Board of Supervisors directly contacted Maia Bellon, Director of the Department of Ecology to request assistance to complete a plan. Financial assistance is currently waiting on the passage of a State Budget by the Washington State Legislature.

In addition, KCCD has contacted multiple state and federal agencies asking for assistance, not just for planning, but also for implementation of on-the-ground projects. The KCCD maintains an ongoing list of conservation projects that will reduce demand for irrigation water while providing an array of benefits including water quality improvements and instream flow/fish habitat improvements. The irrigation districts and companies in Kittitas County also have projects in various stages of development that reduce demand, improve efficiency of delivery and provide a range of instream flow and water quality benefits.

The completion of a Drought Response Plan directed through the Hazard Mitigation Plan is an opportunity to increase coordination and accelerate the implementation of important projects that are critical to establishing a long term level of drought resiliency for agriculture, fish & wildlife and the community. The local Drought Response Plan will be linked to the efforts of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan which is working to improve storage and conservation on a larger scale in the basin.



Manastash Creek at Cove Road before the USBR project water was added (June 8, 2015)



Manastash Creek at Cove Road after the USBR project water was added (June 11, 2015)

In response to the drought conditions, the Kittitas Reclamation District (KRD) is working to supplement Manastash Creek, Taneum Creek, Big Creek, Little Creek, Tillman Creek, Tucker Creek and Spex Arth Creek with US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) project water in order to help sustain fish habitat and riparian vegetation. This USBR project water is intended for downstream diverters (e.g. Roza Irrigation District), but instead of flowing down the Yakima River, the water is wheeled through the KRD system and spilled into these tributaries which then flow into the Yakima River. *(continued)*

As a direct result of recently completed conservation projects (pipelines) related to implementation of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, the KRD is able to contribute to Manastash Creek. Manastash Creek flows this year are as much as 80% less than recorded in the last few years. In late June, the flows in Manastash Canyon were approximately 16 cubic feet per second (CFS). Recent years have seen flows at the same time of the year in the range of 70 to 100 CFS. The cooperative efforts of the KRD, KCCD staff, and the irrigators means that Manastash Creek, and the other tributaries will continue to flow through the summer.

Flurry of Irrigation System Improvement Projects Implemented

In the past year, KCCD worked with more than a dozen landowners to implement irrigation system upgrades. Four of the projects were funded through KCCD's Small Project Cost Share Program, two were funded through the Irrigation Efficiencies Program, one was funded through a specific Ecology grant and the rest were funded through a "Non-Shellfish" grant from the Washington State Conservation Commission. The importance of these projects becomes even more evident in drought years, as they all reduce irrigation water demands and increase drought resiliency.

The Small Project Cost Share program is limited to 50% cost share not to exceed \$4,000. In the fall of 2014, four projects were approved for funding. All four are conversions to sprinkler systems on small acreages.

The Irrigation Efficiencies Program provides cost share to water right holders interested in converting to sprinkler systems in exchange for enrolling the water saved through the conversion into the Trust Water Rights Program to benefit instream flow. The program provides cost share up to 85 percent of total project costs. Projects completed in 2014/2015 benefit instream flow in Caribou Creek and Cooke Creek. Past projects have benefited eleven creeks across Kittitas County from Big Creek and the Teanaway River in the Upper County to Lmuma Creek in the Yakima Canyon. Over the last 14 years, a total of \$4 Million in Cost Share Funds has been invested in 22 contracts impacting 2500 acres and resulting in 4655 acre-feet of water placed in the Trust Water Rights Program for time periods ranging from 10 years to perpetuity.

Similar to the Irrigation Efficiencies Program, KCCD has a grant from Ecology that is specific to the Manastash Creek. A sprinkler conversion project was implemented in this watershed earlier this year and the water saved was dedicated to the Trust Water Rights program in perpetuity to benefit instream flow. Nearly 700 acres in the Manastash have been converted to sprinklers with various funding sources including Bonneville Power Administration, Ecology,



Non-Shellfish projects like this one were completed across the Kittitas Valley from 2013 to 2015. A list of projects still needing funding exceeds 4,000 acres.

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

The Non-Shellfish projects, so named because the 2013 Legislature provided two categories of water quality improvement funding (shellfish and non-shellfish), assisted twelve local landowners over a two year period to install sprinkler systems. This cost share program is limited to \$50,000 per eligible landowner per year. The projects implemented with this funding source are helping to reduce sediment transport to waterways (both creeks and ditches/canals that lead to creeks). The conversions from rill irrigation (gated pipe or concrete ditch & siphon tubes) means less tailwater and therefore less soil and nutrient movement off of agricultural lands. This helps to address the Upper Yakima Suspended Sediment TMDL (a water cleanup plan). There remains significant work to do to meet the Upper Yakima TMDL goals. Those goals for sediment levels at compliance points in streams was extended to 2017. A project list currently held by and maintained by the KCCD prioritizes projects based on criteria including proximity to streams and canals, slope, cost share per acre, and whether the landowner has received funding recently. Although many projects have been implemented, the waiting list includes approximately 4,000 acres owned by cooperators who are interested in converting to sprinklers. Additional funding is being sought. Any landowners with projects not already on our list are encouraged to contact Mark Crowley at 509 925-3352 ext. 5.

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Washington Communities Connect Ahead of a Dry Summer

Ryan Anderson, WA FAC Executive Coordinator

With drought declared across Washington State, our forests, rangelands and communities are gearing up for what may be a challenging summer. A new network of communities working to better live with wildfire was launched in Spokane in early May. The seven communities comprising the Washington State Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network gathered with members of the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, US Forest Service, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Bureau of Land Management, local Conservation Districts and fire departments from across Washington in order to begin building a network of shared resources and learning opportunities.

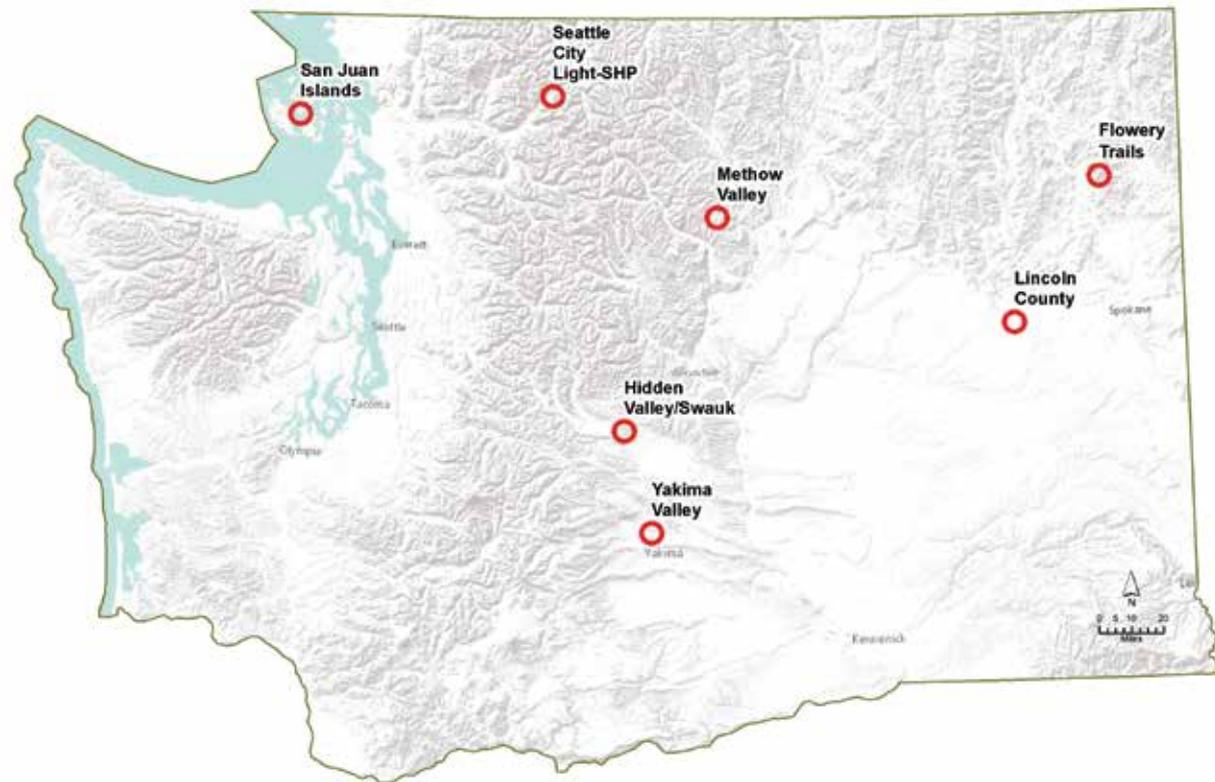
"We endeavored to find communities that were diverse, ready to share successes and failures, and eager to work hard within their own community," explained Ryan Anderson, Director of the Washington State Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network. The flagship seven communities include: Seattle City Light-Skagit Hydroelectric Project, Flowery Trails Homeowner Association, Hidden Valley/Swauk, Okanogan County Conservation District, San Juan Island, Lincoln County Conservation District, and Yakima County Fire Adapted Communities Coalition. According to

Anderson, "Each of these communities bring something unique and valuable to the table and we couldn't be more excited."

Washington State is the first state-level expansion of the national Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, a program designed to share best practices and innovations in order to accelerate the adoption of fire adapted community concepts nationwide. Across the nation, there are 17 hubs participating in the national FAC Learning Network- a partnership between The Nature Conservancy, US Forest Service, Dept. of Interior, and the Watershed Research and Training Center. The Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition in Leavenworth is one such participant. The Bureau of Land Management is supporting acceleration of Fire Adapted Communities in Washington State through funding for a state-level Learning Network. Each of the selected seven communities will receive support from network staff and some funding to help build awareness and resilience in their own communities and also share lessons with each other. Communities are now developing a program of work for the coming year. Support from the Washington Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network will help develop local business resilience, host community-wide wildfire workshops and more.

The ultimate goal? A resilient, fire-adapted Washington comprised of communities that understand both their role and the role of fire in the landscapes we share. Individuals wanting to learn more about their role in fire adapted communities can visit www.facnetwork.org.

Washington State Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network



The seven communities selected by the Washington State Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network Steering Committee

The Hidden Valley/Swauk area was chosen to be one of Washington State's new Fire Adapted Communities. "Having lived through the Taylor Bridge Fire, these landowner's realize the effects of wildfire and are making the effort to take responsibility to make their community more resilient," said Suzanne Wade, Steering Committee member for the WA Fire Adapted Community Learning Network

Wildfire Preparedness Day

Kittitas County has seen a dramatic increase in major wildfires during the past three years. From 2012 to 2014, seven major wildfires occurred in our county, resulting in the decimation of more than 208,000 acres and the loss of more than 300 structures. Consequently, landowners are taking responsibility to make their homes more defensible and better able to survive a wildfire.

The Kittitas County Conservation District organized an event for Wildfire Community Preparedness Day on May 2nd. Over 120 landowners concerned with our County's recent increase in wildfires attended this informative workshop and learned more about wildfire, defensible space, Fire Adapted Communities and cost-share programs available. Unionville Ranch in Hidden Valley graciously offered us their arena to showcase this event, and KCFD #7 obtained a National Fire Protection Agency grant to help fund the BBQ held afterwards.



Suzanne Wade of the KCCD introduces Carolyn Berglund, a homeowner who recently joined KCFD#7.

Speakers from a variety of organizations such as Department of Natural Resources, (DNR) The Nature Conservancy, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Kittitas County Fire Marshal, and PEMCO insurance joined the Conservation District to get information out to landowners. Homeowners who have lived through wildfire also gave presentations. KCFD 1, KCFD 7 and KCFD 51 were in attendance with crews available to answer questions and promote this informative day.



Reese Lolley of The Nature Conservancy and Matt Eberlein, Fire Manager at the Southeast region of DNR participated in the workshop. Photobombed by Chief Jay Wiseman of KCFD 51.



Landowners visit various booths between presentations.

KCCD Annual Dinner

Each year, the KCCD holds an Annual Meeting and dinner to review activities and accomplishments and to recognize those individuals who have contributed significantly to improve natural resource conditions in our District. For 2014, landowners and partners were honored for their work with us. Pictured from left to right: Fred Feddema, Bart Bland, Randy Rhodes, Don Weber, Kirk Holmes, Brian and Becky Cortese.



- ◆ Inside:
- ◆ State Conservation Commission Tour
- ◆ Wildfire Awareness Day
- ◆ Fire Adapted Communities
- ◆ Drought response

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