

Local Funding Makes Local Conservation Possible

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First of all, thank you! If you are a property owner in unincorporated Okanogan County, or the cities of Okanogan, East Omak, Nespelem, Elmer City, and Coulee Dam, you have been part of our mission to work collaboratively with land managers to care for the natural resources in Okanogan County. That line on your annual tax statement that says "conservation" has provided a small-but-stable source of funding for the last 10 years of Okanogan CD's special assessment. **It's time to renew that local funding, and we'd like your support.** Here's why we think it's important:

Local Funding is Important to our Area Economy

We turn every dollar collected through the assessment into **seven** dollars in private, local, state and federal grant funds, along with landowner cost share. These are dollars that are spent right here, in Okanogan County.

Local Funding Provides Stability in Uncertain Times

A baseline amount of dollars allows us to keep up basic operations and allows us to address local priorities even when grant funding is lacking. In the last several years, there have been shortages of state funding, government shutdowns, and the loss of in-kind donations for office space and utilities. Without local funds to bridge these gaps, any one of these crises could have kept us from providing landowners with much needed services.

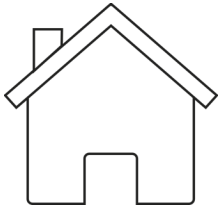
Local Funding Made Fire Recovery Efforts Possible

Over the past two years, Okanogan CD staff have secured more than \$3 million in grant funds for fire recovery. Local funds supported our efforts to assist hundreds of landowners and implement projects such as emergency home protection, fence replacement, erosion control seeding, coordination of emergency rain gage installation, emergency feed for livestock producers, and analysis of burn severity. Without the flexibility that local funding provides, it would have been extremely difficult to help fire survivors recover from the back-to-back wildfire disasters.

The time has come to renew the local funding currently collected through an assessment. In that renewal process, Okanogan CD proposes to switch from an assessment system to a rates and charges system. *Continued next page*

Local Funding, continued

The property owners in the Okanogan CD service area will see a very slight difference in their annual bill under the rates and charges (R&C) system. The funds will still be collected through the property tax statements sent by the County, and there will still be a maximum of \$5 per parcel and \$0.10 per acre. Here's a few examples of how the renewal could affect your tax bill:



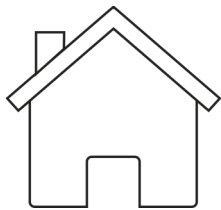
1-acre Residential

2007-2016 Assessment: \$2.44
2017-2026 R&C: \$2.58
Increase of \$0.14



5-acre Residential

2007-2016 Assessment: \$2.60
2017-2026 R&C: \$2.78
Increase of \$0.18



40-acre Agricultural

2007-2016 Assessment: \$4.00
2017-2026 R&C: \$4.55
Increase of \$0.55



100-acre Agricultural

2007-2016 Assessment: \$6.40
2017-2026 R&C: \$7.55
Increase of \$1.15

As you can see, the increases are quite small. If you'd like to really dive into the details of how the rates and charges are determined, you can visit our website at www.okanogancd.org/local-funding. You can also call and speak with District Manager Craig Nelson during office hours, Monday– Friday, 8:00-4:30.

We need your support!

If you value our services, please let us know with a letter or email. We'd love to hear your stories of how we've been able to help you meet your conservation goals or how we've helped you be better prepared for wildfire and other disasters. We'll share those with the Board of County Commissioners, who have the final say in the renewal of local funding for the Okanogan Conservation District. Please send letters to 1251 South 2nd Ave, Room 102, Okanogan, WA 98840. Emails can be sent to ocd@okanogancd.org with the subject line "letter of support". Thank you!

Fire Recovery Update:

Our fire recovery team has been making progress to help landowners bounce back from the Carlton and Okanogan Complex Fires, as well as protect natural resources from further damage. Staff members have been busy in the field, in the office, and on the phone to gather the information required by the State of Washington for fire recovery funding assistance.

So far, we have submitted 22 projects to the Washington State Conservation Commission, which includes the repair of 32 miles of fence. Another 20 potential projects to replace damaged infrastructure such as fence, irrigation, and culverts are in the pipeline. We are also developing a list of post-fire forestry practices that may be eligible for further landowner assistance funding.

New Staff

Please join us in welcoming four new staff members to our team! We're calling them our "Fire Recovery Squad", since their primary role is to work with landowners to help restore the natural resources and agricultural infrastructure destroyed by wildfires in 2014 and 2015. Becky Snijder, Kim Kogler, and Kyle McGovern are Natural Resource Technicians who will be conducting site visits and guiding landowners through the cost-share funding process for fire recovery. Juan Ledezma is a Financial Assistant who will focus on the dollars



From L to R: Becky Snijder, Kim Kogler, Juan Ledezma, Kyle McGovern

-and-cents side of cost-share contracts, and provide support to our District Treasurer, Kim Simpson. Stop by and say hi to the newest members of the Okanogan CD family!

Manager's Note:

By Craig Nelson

We are seeking renewal of our special assessment this year after 10 years of it providing stability for our program. These local funds are imperative to having a voluntary, non-regulatory conservation program in Okanogan County.

Assessment funds pay to keep the lights on, to provide training to staff so they can provide our cooperators with the best and most up-to-date guidance possible, and to fund staff time to work with landowners who have requests for assistance that we can't charge to a grant.

We deeply appreciate the support from our community and hope you have all appreciated the work that we have done with your investment at the local, state, and federal level. Taxes and assessments are never an easy conversation, and we know that the work we do is lower on the priority scale when compared to education, prisons, and transportation, just to name a few. However, the fact that our local leaders have chosen to invest in this work, no matter the level, speaks volumes about the community in which we live.

We have a beautiful community that has many great natural resource treasures that are managed, conserved, used, and enjoyed by our local citizens. We appreciate the opportunity to help each of you to make these places even better.

Don't Farm Naked...Try Cover Crops!

By Leslie Michel, Okanogan Conservation District Soil Scientist

Soils play an integral part in crop production, and are teeming with life. In one teaspoon of soil there can be up to 1 billion bacteria, 50,000 protozoa, yards of fungal hyphae, and dozens of nematodes and micro-arthropods. For over 100 years, we've been farming in this area, utilizing the soil and the resources that it provides to create abundant crops and quality livestock. Too often, however, we are also depleting nutrients, only replenishing specific nutrients in the soil when crop production starts to fall off. Now it's our turn to start giving back to our soils what they've given to us over the last 100 years. How do we do that? Through improving soil health.

One of the ways I work with farmers to improve their soil health is through the use of **cover crops**. Cover crops improve soil health and reduce erosion by increasing organic matter in the soil. This has a number of positive effects, such as:

- **Increasing cation exchange capacity (CEC).** Soils with a low CEC are more likely to develop deficiencies in potassium (K⁺), magnesium (Mg²⁺) and other cations.
- **Reducing bulk density.** High bulk density is an indicator of low soil porosity and soil compaction, which can result in poor root and plant growth.
- **Increasing microbial activity.** Soil microbes improve soil fertility by performing a number of functions that are beneficial for plants, such as releasing nutrients, controlling pathogens, and building soil structure.
- **Increasing water holding capacity.** Greater water holding capacity can reduce the amount of irrigation needed and/or increase a crop's resiliency in the face of drought.

Species within a cover crop can be chosen to help specifically target certain management goals, such as breaking up compaction, reducing erosion, or increasing infiltration. Long term, the goal of cover crops is to improve soil health to build resiliency into farm operations. For instance, if a farmer has better infiltration and higher water holding capacity in his soil, his fields are better able to withstand drought conditions.

Learning what works in each system takes time, education, and a willingness to try a little innovation. What are your management goals? Are you irrigated or dryland? Do you have cattle and are interested in grazing your crop? What's your climate and soil like? If you are interested in improving soil health in your operation, you can contact me at leslie@okanogand.org or 509.422.0855 x.106



Checking the impacts of cover crops on soil health at a recent field day with area producers.

Baling Twine: A Hazard on the Landscape

By Allisa Carlson, Okanogan Conservation District Wildlife Conservation Planner

In Okanogan County, we are fortunate to enjoy an abundance of wildlife, especially migrating birds. Osprey arrive here in the spring from their wintering grounds in Central and South America, and are harbingers of summer. They nest along our rivers and lakes, where they catch fish for their newly hatched chicks. Osprey are relatively long-lived, and the same pair will often use the same nest for many years.

Unfortunately, one of the materials ospreys favor for lining their nests is baling twine. The plastic baling twine can easily tangle in the osprey's sharp talons, and kills about 10% of chicks and many adults (*University of Montana*). Recently, baling twine caused a fatality for one of our local ospreys near Winthrop (see the August 3, 2016 edition of the Methow Valley News for more details).

Baling twine left in our fields, yards, and gardens can also pose a risk to both animals and humans. Livestock and other wildlife can ingest baling twine and become seriously ill or die. The burial or burning of twine is unsafe due to the toxic chemicals emitted. However, there is a very easy solution! Pick up used baling twine (and fishing line), store it out of sight, in barns or covered containers, and dispose of it safely out of the reach of ospreys and other wildlife. The Green Okanogan recycling facility in Tonasket accepts baling twine. They are located at 3 Rodeo Rd, just south of Tonasket off Hwy 97 at Clarkson Mill Road. They are open Tuesdays noon-6pm, Thursdays 10 am-4 pm, and Saturdays 10am-4pm. Their phone number is 509-486-0674. <http://www.greenokanogan.org/>



A stark example of the problem along Osprey Drive in Okanogan.

The Okanogan Conservation District is currently researching the feasibility of starting a drop-off and delivery recycling program in Okanogan County. Please contact Allisa Carlson at 509-422-0855 x. 111 if you would be interested in this type of program or would like to help. Thank you for your help in conserving our natural resources!

Honey Bees and Pesticides

From the Washington State AgForestry Class 37 Bee Info Series #3

Bees are born to work. They are perhaps the hardest working creatures on the planet, and their labor benefits food production in the most valuable way.



There are around 4,000 different bee species in the U.S. The *Apidae* family is perhaps the most well-known bee family, with familiar members such as the honeybee, carpenter bee and the bumblebee. Bees are responsible for pollinating about one-sixth of blossoming plants around the world, and approximately 400 different types of agricultural plants.

Honey bees are the most economically valuable pollinator worldwide, and many high-value crops such as our apples, pears and cherries are entirely reliant upon pollination. Globally, 9.5% of the total economic value of agricultural production for human consumption comes from insect pollination. This amounts to around \$200 billion annually. While some plants are able to self-pollinate (sometimes using the wind to help disperse pollen), commercial fruit trees rely on bees for pollination. In the U.S., honey bees pollinate nearly 95 kinds of fruits (including apples, pears, and cherries).

We can all help the honey bees by using low-impact chemicals and spraying during the time that will cause the least harm to the bees. If possible, spray pre or post bloom, and try to do this at night when the bees are not present. This will give the chemical time to dry on the plant before the bees become active again the next day. If late evening is not possible, then early morning would be the next best option. **ALWAYS read and follow labels thoroughly to ensure proper application rates and timing.**



Initiative for Rural Innovation & Stewardship

Connecting People, Place and Possibility

7th annual NCW Community Success Summit in Quincy

Tuesday, November 15, 2016.

“Seeding Success, Growing ONE Community”

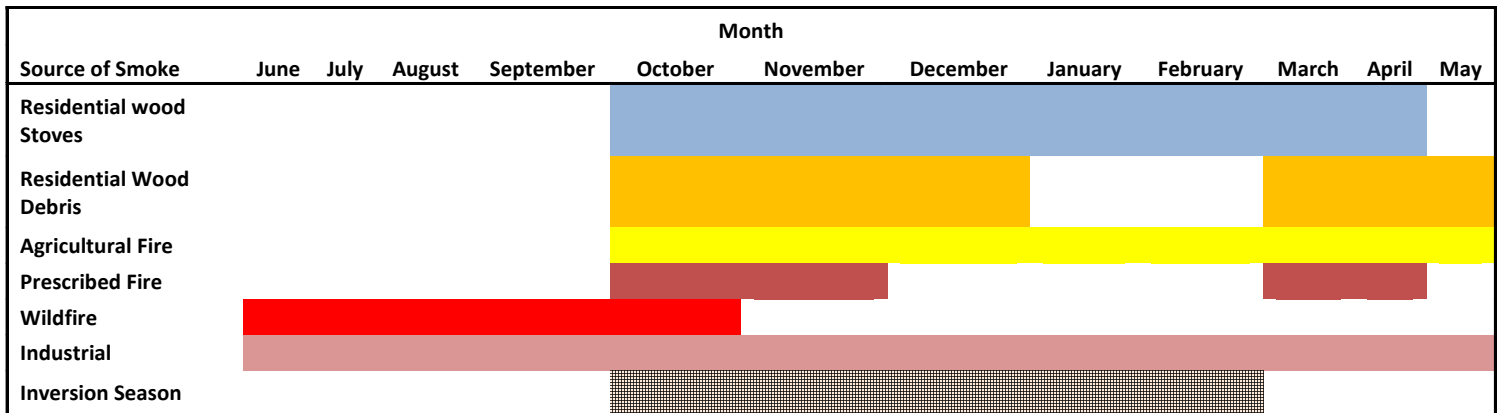
9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Quincy Junior High School

Visit www.irisncw.org to register

Air Quality: Be Kind to Your Neighbors

By Kris Ray, Air Quality Program Manager, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation

The Air Quality program of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation operates a monitoring network, conducts emissions inventories, and assists with the federal permitting and compliance process. Using the monitoring data, emission inventory, and other local information **we have identified smoke as the most detrimental health impact to our communities.** While our exposure to smoke can be year round (Figure 1), the months of October to April are when smoke is most likely affecting us. These are also the times we have the most control to prevent problems.



Smoke from burning leaves and firewood contains small particles, 2.5 micrometers in diameter or smaller (PM 2.5). These particles can get deep into the lungs and cause serious health problems. People with heart or lung diseases, children, and elders are most likely to be affected by PM 2.5. The smoke from burning branches and leaves goes straight up, and then moves with the wind or spreads out during an inversion. The smoke eventually comes back down in your neighborhood, or a mile away. When it does, the person living there has to deal with it.



Seriously, don't be this guy.

Never burn wet leaves. Wet leaves produce the maximum amount of smoke, take longer to burn, pollute the neighborhood, and smell bad. Alternatives to burning include composting, using the free leaf bag pickup service offered in towns, and taking the leaves and branches to the landfill. If you do burn, a permit is needed from your town and **you cannot burn during a ban.** Be courteous to your neighbors and don't let your smoke affect them!



Select Washington state and scroll down the list of locations to find Omak, Twisp, Winthrop, Nespelem, Inchelium, Colville and Wellpinit.



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Okanogan Conservation District

www.okanogancd.org

Providing local leadership through educational, technical, and financial assistance to landowners to help them voluntarily conserve and enhance natural resources for over 75 years.

We want your input!

Share your thoughts for our upcoming 5 year plan.

Visit www.okanogancd.org/survey2016

This newsletter

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