

Funding for Fish-friendly Screens

March 2013



Okanogan Conservation District
WSU Okanogan County Extension

Resource Quarterly

If you are an irrigator pumping water from the Okanogan River, and your intake screen looks like the one on the right, we've got the program for you!

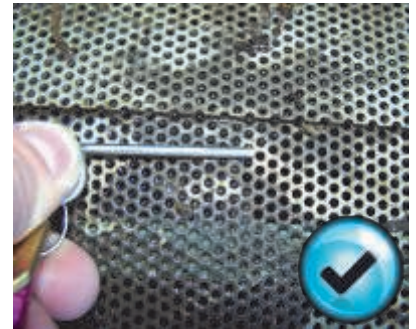
In order to protect young salmon and steelhead, openings of screens must be no larger than 3/32 of an inch (see middle photo). Compliance with state and federal fish protection laws is mandatory.

There are over 100 screens along the Okanogan River that do not meet fish protection criteria. Irrigators can install their own fish screens, but we can make it easier for you through our voluntary screen replacement program. Benefits of the program include:

- 100% funding for screen and installation
- Technical support
- Streamlined permitting process
- No guesswork about compliance

So far, 17 screens have been installed at no cost to the irrigator, thanks to grant funding from the Colville Confederated Tribes and the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board. These properly sized screens not only protect fish, but also minimize debris build-up and increase pump efficiency. Modern screens come in a variety of sizes and capabilities, including ones that can operate in shallow water and/or are self-cleaning.

For more information about this program, contact Bob Clark at 509-422-0855 ext. 122, or email bobc@okanogancd.org.



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Okanogan Conservation District
 Native Plant Sale &
 Master Gardener Plant Clinic
 Saturday, April 6
 8 am—12 pm
 Okanogan County Fairgrounds
 Horticulture Building

Got Water? Take Steps to Protect It!

By Terri Williams, Conservation Planner, Okanogan Conservation District



One foundation of a happy, healthy and abundant life is clean, clear water. Good quality water means survival for all living things; people, plants, animals, insects, and microbes. It keeps our landscapes green and our **kitchens full. But sometimes there isn't enough water**, or the water we have becomes unfit for use. Illness, thirst, scarcity, poor growth, dehydration, and even **death can happen to all forms of life if we don't protect** and conserve the beautifully complex system of water movement, filtration and distribution through the landscape. The streams, lakes, rivers and wetlands in Washington are a priceless resource worth conserving.

Do you have concerns about the water-associated areas of your property? Perhaps livestock have made the pond or stream on your property a muck hole, or eaten all the vegetation from the stream banks. Perhaps the previous owner of the property installed a culvert that prevents fish from moving up and **downstream. Perhaps you'd like to increase the** habitat for a favorite species of wildlife, or plant a bigger variety of species of trees and shrubs along the edge of a creek or pond.



The Okanogan Conservation District can help you develop your ideas for how to conserve and protect **your water resources. We'll work with you to assess** the present condition of your water-associated areas and collaborate with you to make a detailed plan that will protect and conserve these areas and the water that flows through them. Conservation plans do take time to develop, but plans are a long-term investment in your valuable property, and plan assistance through the Conservation District is free!



Once you have a plan, the next steps are up to you. If you decide you'd like to implement recommended conservation practices, we can help you apply for financial assistance programs that may make your **plans more affordable. Project development and ranking for this year's funding cycle is coming up soon** – plans must be fully developed and ranked by mid-June to be eligible for consideration for funding in July. So get in touch today! Call Terri at 509.422.0855 ext. 105 or email terriw@okanogancd.org.

Education and Outreach Update

By Kirsten Cook, Okanogan Conservation District

Okanogan Conservation District reached 22% more people in 2012 than in 2011. A total of 4,106 people of all ages participated in our various education and outreach programs. Nearly 1,000 of those were school-age youth. Our stream simulation table was an especially big hit in classrooms and at events like the County Fair.

We attended nine events for the first time in 2012, including the Colville Confederated Tribes Earth Day Celebration, the Women in Agriculture Conference, and the LDS Preparedness Fair, to name a few. Thanks to all of you who stopped by with questions or ideas for how we can best meet our mission to help landowners conserve the natural resources of Okanogan County!

2013 is off to a great start: we've done programs with the entire K-5 population of the Pateros School District and are completely booked up for the remainder of the 2012-2013 school year. We hope you'll come see us at the many events we are scheduled to attend, especially the week around Earth Day (April 22)!



4H camper discovers that aquatic insects can tell you a lot about water quality at Lost Lake (plus it's fun!)

Manager's Note...

Craig Nelson, Okanogan Conservation District

Everyone who is ready for the spring thaw to descend upon us please raise your hand! This time of year can be difficult for some and the last opportunity for some semblance of rest for many area farmers and ranchers. Soon, we will all be kicking into our proverbial high gear to get the things done we conjured up while sitting in front of a warm fire or talking shop with friends and neighbors all winter.

This isn't a bad thing. Really, it is a celebration of ideas and opportunity.

While we celebrate New Year in January, this is the time of year where we can put thought to practice, deed to soil, love to plant and animal, and make something of the new year offered to us. Okanogan Conservation District Board and Staff used the winter months to review and amend our Long Range Plan. We will have it on our website soon for everyone to review and provide feedback to us so we know where we hit the mark and where we need to true our aim.

I heard a statement the other day that I want to share with you. "Bad policy gets in the way of good conservation". We want to make sure our long range plan is good policy that will help us help you. Please call us and give us your feedback. Tell us what we do well, and what we can improve upon. If you have a lot of input, passion for conservation, and a desire to be a part of the solution, talk to us about our open position on the Board of Supervisors (see the announcement on page 10).



WSU Extension: Ag and Country Living

By Curtis Beus, WSU Extension

Spring is just around the corner: time to get out in the garden, buy some chicks, spruce up the yard, start some seeds, welcome the new calves, fix the mower, and figure out what to do with that weed patch behind the barn. **In other words, it's time to get outside and do what many of us love to do in Okanogan County – enjoy our country way of life.** WSU Extension has been helping people improve their soils, their gardens, their forests, their farms and their quality of life since 1914 when we were **first founded (that's 99 years this year!).** **In this** tradition, the WSU Extension office in Okanogan County is rolling out a new series of classes: the WSU Ag & Country Living Series. These workshops, seminars, and field days are designed to help you better utilize your soils, livestock, gardens, farms and other country resources. Beginning in March and continuing throughout the year, WSU Extension will be conducting a variety of exciting educational programs that will bring the latest university-based knowledge and information to you.



Many of these classes and programs will be done in partnership with the new Big R Store in Omak, who has agreed to provide the classroom and other resources to assist WSU in putting on this series of educational programs. When you next visit the Big R Store in Omak, make sure to look for the large screen display that will be advertising our upcoming WSU Ag & Country Living programs. This display will cycle through different screens to tell you about upcoming WSU educational events, and other related programs put on by other partners such as the Okanogan Conservation District, the Okanogan Noxious Weed Board, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and others. At this display you will also find brochures with the information needed to register and attend the various upcoming educational events.

In addition to the display at the Omak Big R Store, we will also keep a calendar of upcoming WSU Ag & Country Living classes on our website at <http://okanogan.wsu.edu>. We will also work hard to get these classes listed in local newspapers, featured on the community calendar of events on the radio, and **publicized as best we can in other means throughout the county.** **In fact, we'd love to put up other large computer monitors in other locations in the county similar to what we're doing at the Omak Big R Store.** So, if you know if a good location in the Methow Valley, North Okanogan County, or other locations, **please don't hesitate to get in touch with us and let us know, as we'd love to promote these classes in other locations.**

Please call or email to pre-register for these classes to help us to better plan for them. In most cases you will also be able to register at the door the day of the class. Most classes and programs in this series will have a modest fee that will help us cover the cost of bringing these programs to you. To register or to get more info about any of these programs, call 509-422-7245 or email okanogan.county@wsu.edu.

Ag and Country Living Educational Series

Continued from previous page

| Topic | Date | Time | Location | Fee |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------|--|--|
| Noxious Weed Conference | Wednesday March 27 | 8:00 am to 4:20 pm | AgriPlex building at the Okanogan County Fairgrounds | \$5.00 |
| Vegetable Gardening | Thursday March 28 | 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm | Omak Big R Store | \$5.00 |
| Poultry Production | Wednesday April 3 | 9:00 am to 3:00 pm | Omak Big R Store and also visit poultry farm after lunch | \$25.00 (includes lunch) |
| Okanogan Conservation District Native Plant Sale | Saturday April 6 | 8:00 am to 12:00 pm | Horticulture Building at the Okanogan County Fairgrounds | none |
| WSU Master Gardener Plant Sale | Saturday May 11 | 9:00 am to 2:00 pm | Civic League Park in Omak | none |
| Introduction to Beekeeping | Wednesday May 15 | 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm | Omak Big R Store | \$20.00 |
| Growing and Using Herbs. | Wednesday June 5 | 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm | Omak Big R Store | \$10.00 |
| Purina HOW – “Horse Owners’ Workshop” | Saturday June 8 | 9:00 to 5:00 pm | Omak Big R Store. | none |
| Solar & Wind Energy for the Home and Farm | Thursday June 13 | 3:00 am to 5:00 pm | Omak Big R Store | none |
| WSU Forest & Range Land Owner’s Field Day | Saturday June 22 | 9:00 am to 4:00 pm | To Be Announced | \$20.00 for individuals, and \$30.00 for couples, families or groups |
| Composting for the Garden or Farm | Wednesday July 10 | 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm | Omak Big R Store | \$5.00 |
| Basics of Growing Wine Grapes | Wednesday September 4 | 10:00 am to 3:00 pm | Rockwall Cellars 110 Nichols Rd, Omak | Fee: \$35.00 (includes lunch & wine tasting) |

As other WSU Ag & Country Living Classes and events are planned and scheduled, we will update this list on our display at the Omak Big R Store, in this newsletter, and in other media throughout the county. If you have a great topical idea for a WSU Ag & Country Living Series program, please contact me at 509-422-7248, or drop me an e-mail at beusc@wsu.edu.

Get Ready for Fire Season

By Kirsten Cook, Okanogan Conservation District, with material from the Firewise.org Blog

By the time you read this, the snow will finally be melting off and spring flowers will be starting to bloom. Even as we enjoy this time of year, we know that the hot, dry days of summer are not far away. Okanogan Conservation District is ready to help you prepare for fire season and reduce your risk of home ignition from a wildfire. In 2013, we are launching a county-wide outreach effort to help you and your neighbors learn and implement proven Firewise techniques. We hope that you will be inspired to join with your neighbors to become recognized Firewise Communities— a straightforward process that builds peace of mind, property values, and relationships between communities and their local fire staff.



We will be offering a number of Firewise workshops at various locations in both the Okanogan and Methow valleys. Our first big event will be the Spring Fair Home and Garden Show at the Okanogan County Fairgrounds. You can visit with us at our booth and pick up Firewise information, or sign up for a free two-hour workshop to really get into the details of defensible space, the home-ignition zone, and fire-resistant landscaping. Also look for us at local farmers markets this summer, where you can sign up for a free risk assessment and learn about upcoming Firewise events.



For those of you living close to town, when someone says “wildfire” or “wildland fire,” it might conjure up some fairly specific images, most of which don’t involve your house. Not living in an area that feels “wild,” overgrown or shrub-covered can lead homeowners to believe that their properties are not at risk. However, if brush, grass, or woods are nearby, all it takes are the right conditions and an ignition source. Suddenly, a fire outside your home could be advancing on it. Contact the Okanogan Conservation District for a free risk assessment to

find out what hazards could be around your property and what you can do to make your home fire-safe.

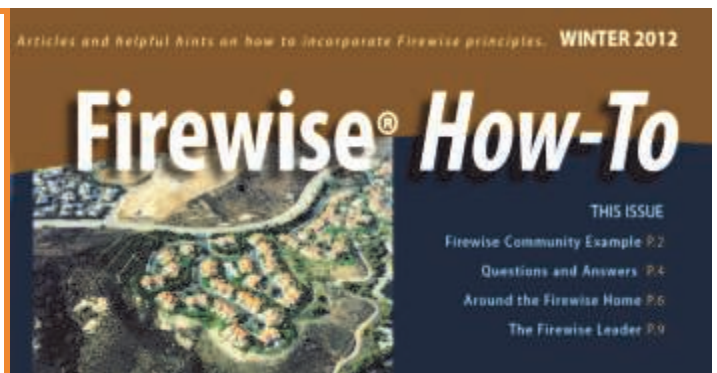
Our Firewise outreach efforts are made possible by State Fire Assistance funds and USFS Title III funds, and thanks to our partners: Okanogan County and Washington Department of Natural Resources.

Firewise Resources on the Internet:

<http://www.firewise.org/information.aspx>

<http://www.facebook.com/firewise>

http://www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/rp_fireprev_home.pdf



Weed Management: Coordination Pays Off

By Anna Lyon, Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control Board

The Okanogan County Coordinated Weed Management Area partnership is proving a useful tool for participants: it enables us to seek grant dollars and coordinate education and control activities across broad areas with multiple landowners. It has also allowed the Noxious Weed Office to form closer partnerships with both Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the US Forest Service (Methow Ranger District). In 2013 we will be working with these partners to perform control work on their lands with the funding coming from the State Legislature and grant dollars from National Forest Foundation.



Because of these contracts and several other grants that we have received, we are anticipating a very busy field season. We will be starting early, hopefully doing some treatments in March and going through September. While we will all be working hard, there are not enough hours in the day to meet the needs of landowners in Okanogan County and ensure compliance with RCW 17.10. With that in mind, the Noxious Weed Office will be implementing some major changes in 2013.

The biggest change will be in the office hours. During the 2013 field season, April through September, the Noxious Weed Office will reduce the number of hours the office is open to the public. Field season office hours will be Monday through Wednesday from 9:00am to 4:00pm. By following the same hours as the rest of the Courthouse, we will be increasing the number of contacts we can make to individual landowners, helping them achieve compliance with the State Weed Law. By limiting the days of the week in the office, we will be increasing the actual amount of field time per week and allow for more time to follow up on landowner concerns.



Buffalobur (*Solanum rostratum*) is a Class A Noxious Weed in Okanogan County—eradication is required!

We encourage everyone with comments or concerns to contact us at the office: 509-422-7165, or noxiousweeds@co.okanogan.wa.us. For contact information regarding individual staff members, you can look at the Noxious Weed Board website at www.okanogancounty.org/nw. Besides contact information, you will also find other useful items, such as upcoming events, the current Noxious Weed Newsletter, and links to informative websites such as the Crop Data Management Systems website where you can read an actual herbicide label before purchasing, and the State Weed Board website where you can find data and pictures on the various noxious weeds and the relevant noxious weed laws.

Conservation Success: Partnerships in the Methow

By Randy R. Kelley, NRCS District Conservationist, Retired

As the human population and pressures on natural resources increase, the more we learn the value of productive soil, clean air, suitable habitat for wildlife, healthy forests and grazing lands, and certainly clean water. Improving technology is greatly challenged to stay ahead of human impacts to natural resources. **Costs continually escalate and demands on the nation's financial resources follow the same path.** How can we ameliorate the economic challenges faced by agriculture as government funding becomes tighter? Developing new partnerships and expanding on those we already have in place brings more resources to bear on resource concerns shared by many.

The Methow Valley holds an example of a stellar partnership between the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Washington Water Project of Trout Unlimited (TU). Since 2009, TU has been selected for three Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) projects and one Agricultural Water Enhancement Program project. The partnership is providing complementary and compatible financial and technical assistance to willing farmers and ranchers for activities that improve instream flows for salmonids.

So what has the partnership achieved since 2009? By the end of 2010, almost 3,000 feet of earthen **ditch was enclosed in 15" to 24" diameter pipe on the Little Barkley Ditch between the towns of Winthrop and Twisp.** This included a large state-of-the-art fish screen and diversion off the Barkley Ditch. TU also worked with the Chewuch Canal Company to upgrade 8,410 feet of unlined ditch to a pressurized conveyance system, improving stream flows by 3 cubic feet per second. Irrigation sprinkler system improvements on 663 acres will result in an estimated 30% improvement in efficiency, saving water and keeping it available for streams.

So far, there have been 30 CCPI and AWEP contracts with hay land and pasture irrigators in the Methow Basin. Participating landowners voluntarily implemented a number of practices to conserve water, thanks to the technical and financial assistance provided by TU and NRCS. Funding from NRCS injected over \$1.5 million into the ag sector in the Methow. The partnership between Trout Unlimited and NRCS in the Methow Valley has greatly improved agricultural **producers' abilities to survive and produce quality hay and pasture while also improving conditions for endangered and threatened salmon.**



Methow Valley rancher Craig Boesel looks over new pivot irrigation system. Photo by Jeri Timm, Washington Water Project of Trout Unlimited, 2011

This is the type of win-win we strive to provide through the use of public funds and private donors (through TU). Strong partnerships have a very real ability to make positive actions happen.

Small Works Roster for District Projects

By Bob Clark, Okanogan Conservation District

Okanogan Conservation District is transitioning to a small works roster to choose bidders on conservation projects. Initially, the roster will be used to help select contractors to install screens on irrigation pump suction pipes. The roster will also allow the District to notify contractors about future projects.

The roster will be established with the Municipal Research Service Corporation (MRSC)—a shared, online database. To be able to bid on projects, contractors need to register on the MRSC roster. More information can be found at <http://www.mrscrosters.org>. For questions about specific projects, please contact the Okanogan Conservation District by phone at (509) 422-0855 ext. 5 or on our web page at <http://www.okanogancd.org>.

MRSC Rosters Small Public Works Roster is an online system used by multiple Washington State counties, cities and special districts to connect with businesses who would like to provide construction, repair, or maintenance services for small public works projects under \$300,000.00. Per State Statute, RCW 39.04.155, public agencies may choose to use a roster as an alternative to advertising per project.

MRSC Rosters will save Okanogan Conservation District staffing and financial resources by providing full maintenance of its rosters for a nominal annual membership fee. The District will have a broader pool of businesses listed and therefore a greater chance of receiving more preferable bids or proposals, thus more efficiently spending the public dollar.



Come see us at the
Okanogan Spring Fair Home and Garden Show!
April 19th-21st
Okanogan County Fairgrounds

Supervisor Spotlight: Ivan and Gerri Oberg

The Oberg's have been an important part of the Okanogan Conservation District for a generation. Ivan, our Board Chairman for the past 16 years, received his 25-year pin from the Washington Association of Conservation District in December 2012 in honor of this milestone of continuous service. Gerri Oberg has been serving as an Associate Supervisor since 2004. We recently asked Ivan and Gerri to tell us a little bit about themselves and what keeps them committed to the district.



How did you become involved with the Okanogan Conservation District?

Ivan: I got my arm twisted! Ray Visser was leaving as Supervisor, and he talked me into coming in.

Gerri: We were their neighbors, Ivan grew up with their kids.

What have you enjoyed most about working on the Board?

Ivan: Getting conservation implemented on the ground.

Gerri: Yes, that's the same for me...but it's more than that. It's all the good work you see being done. Not just in our neighborhood, but all the good things that have happened, all over Okanogan County.

What do you bring to the Okanogan Conservation District in terms of skills, experience?

Ivan: My farming background; that was really the most important thing.

Gerri: Yes, he was raised on a ranch.

What has kept you volunteering for the District for so long?

Ivan: Of all the volunteer options out there for a person, this has the most tangible impact, making a positive change in the direction of conservation.

What other expertise would you like to see on the Board of Supervisors?

Ivan: It would be great to have someone with orchard and/or horticulture experience.

Conservation District Seeks New Board Member

Consider volunteering with us! This is a great way to contribute your expertise to conservation and your community. District Board Supervisors develop policy, advise staff and work with partners to conserve natural resources in Okanogan County. District supervisors are volunteers and serve without compensation. The board meets at least once per month, usually the first Thursday, to discuss District programs.

To qualify, you must be a registered voter within the District's boundaries and attend three of the most recent five regular monthly board meetings, then submit a written letter stating your interest to the board. If you have any questions, contact Kim Simpson: kims@okanogancd.org or (509) 422-0855 ext 111.

Protect or Enhance That Special Shoreline!

By Bob Clark, Okanogan Conservation District

Anyone who lives close to a reservoir, river, or stream knows there is a special kind of beauty in the place where land and water meet. The same quality that makes the waterfront environment unique also makes it vulnerable. Streambanks and shorelines are ecologically sensitive areas, and are easily damaged and **slow to recover. There is a name for this biologically distinctive area between land and water. It's called the "riparian zone."** The vegetation that grows there serves as a buffer to protect both the land (by helping to hold soils in place and prevent erosion) and the water (by helping to filter pollutants).

Are you interested in ways to reduce erosion, improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife, and enhance aesthetics? If so, you need look no further than the hardy and attractive trees, shrubs, and grasses that are native to our region and well-**suited to life at the water's edge. Once native plants are established, they require little or no maintenance, saving time and expense. Native shrubs, trees, and grasses produce berries, nuts, or seeds used by wildlife. Additionally, it's refreshing to think that native varieties help provide regional context—they just "look right" in this part of the country.**

If riparian zone vegetation has been removed or otherwise made sparse, there is a voluntary program administered by the Okanogan Conservation District in cooperation with the USDA Farm Services Agency and the Washington State Conservation Commission that can provide financial assistance for restoring the vegetation. The types of stream-side lands that are eligible have been greatly increased in recent years.

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) will cover 100% of eligible costs of installing and maintaining the cover to NRCS specifications for the first five years. The Okanogan Conservation District will write a maintenance prescription to identify activities and their costs that will ensure the successful establishment of the planted stock. The maintenance prescription will usually cover the first five years after planting. Most projects will be well established by then.

To find out if CREP might benefit that riparian zone you treasure, please contact Bob Clark at the Okanogan Conservation District, bobc@okanogancd.org, (509) 422-0855, ext. 122.



Okanogan Conservation District
1251 S. 2nd Avenue, Room 102
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www.okanogan.wsu.edu

Okanogan Conservation District

Providing local leadership through educational, technical, and financial assistance to landowners to help them voluntarily conserve and enhance natural resources for over 70 years.

1251 South 2nd Ave. Room 102
Okanogan, WA 98840
509-422-0855 ext. 5

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Washington State University Extension engages people, organizations, and communities to advance knowledge, economic well-being, and quality of life by fostering inquiry, learning, and the application of research.

Okanogan County Courthouse
149 3rd N. Room 101,
Okanogan, WA 98840
509-422-7245

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