

March
2014

Earth, Water, and Fire: District Services are Elemental



Killer horn section and elaborate stage shows? Nope, that's not our gig. But if you're looking for down-to-earth conservation solutions that respect your unique stewardship goals, then you've come to the right place. For almost seventy-five years, the Okanogan Conservation District has worked with landowners and land managers to help them conserve and protect natural resources. Everything we do is on a voluntary, non-regulatory basis, so you can bring us your resource concerns without worry. Take a look at the services we provide, free of charge:



Soil Health

Keep your soil working for you with:

- Soil health assessments
- Soil maps
- Strategies to reduce water and wind erosion

Water Quality

We can help you protect the water you rely on.

- Irrigation efficiency
- Livestock exclusion
- Stream and river bank stabilization

Firewise

Are you prepared for a wildfire? We can help!

- Wildfire Risk Assessments
- Firewise Workshops
- Firewise Communities USA®

Project Proposals Due June 1, 2014

Have a conservation project that needs cost-share funding to implement? Contact us so we can assess 2015 grant opportunities.

In this issue:

Irrigation Efficiencies Program	Page 2
Wildfire Preparedness Day	Page 3
Cover Crops on Dryland Farms	Page 4
Okanogan River Pump Screens	Page 5
Supervisor Spotlight	Page 6
Manager's Note	Page 7

Decrease Stress with Increased Yields

By Jon Culp, Water Resources Programs Manager, Washington State Conservation Commission

Decreased crop stress equals increased yield. Increased yields equal decreased farmer stress. Some might say that participating in the Irrigation Efficiencies Program is like going on a Caribbean vacation in the middle of winter. Will the Okanogan Conservation District send you on a vacation? **Well....no. But they might be able to help you with your stress reduction.**

The Irrigation Efficiencies Program provides cost-share funding and technical assistance to private landowners for installing Best Management Practices (BMPs) for water conservation such as:

- pivot sprinkler systems
- drip irrigation systems
- piping or lining irrigation ditches

The program has proven to be a most effective and fiscally responsible method for achieving on-the-ground water conservation. The program increases flows in streams critical to fish while also addressing local priority resource concerns. Born out of a desire by private landowners and conservation groups to cooperate in a unique effort to restore instream flows, the program fosters partnerships with state and federal agencies, environmental and agricultural interest groups, tribes, municipalities, and rural communities in a coordinated effort to conserve natural resources.

So, if you irrigate out of a salmon bearing stream with an old, leaky irrigation system, or you divert water down an unlined ditch, you may qualify. Please contact Bob Clark at the Okanogan Conservation District (509) 422-0855 extension 122 or bobc@okanogancd.org to learn more about the program.

Check out our website to learn more about this and other programs we offer:

www.okanogancd.org/irrigation



If only!



Irrigation looking like this?



Then consider upgrading to this!

Wildfire Preparedness Day: May 3rd

Come to the Chiliwist community on Saturday, May 3rd and learn what you can do to reduce your wildfire risk. Chiliwist, Okanogan County's first recognized Firewise Community USA®, is hosting a fun day of demonstrations and informational booths. Fire and emergency response professionals will be on hand to answer your questions and help you become better prepared for fire season. If **that isn't enough, there will also be a community-wide yard sale**, with the proceeds going to support Okanogan Fire District 3 (Malott). Light refreshments will be available.



Come for a couple of hours or take the whole day; your participation will help make Okanogan County better prepared for wildfire. Bring your friends and neighbors and get inspired to work on projects that can help protect homes, neighborhoods, and entire communities from future wildfire risk or current post-fire impacts.

Location: The Corrals, at the intersection of Chiliwist Road and North Star Road.

Directions: From Old Highway 97 just south of Malott, turn west onto Chiliwist Road. Continue about 5.5 miles until you reach the corrals.



Schedule:

Yard Sale 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Firewise Programs 10 a.m to 2 p.m.

A detailed schedule of programs and presenters will be available in mid-late April. Visit www.okanogancd.org/Firewise for more information on the day's events.

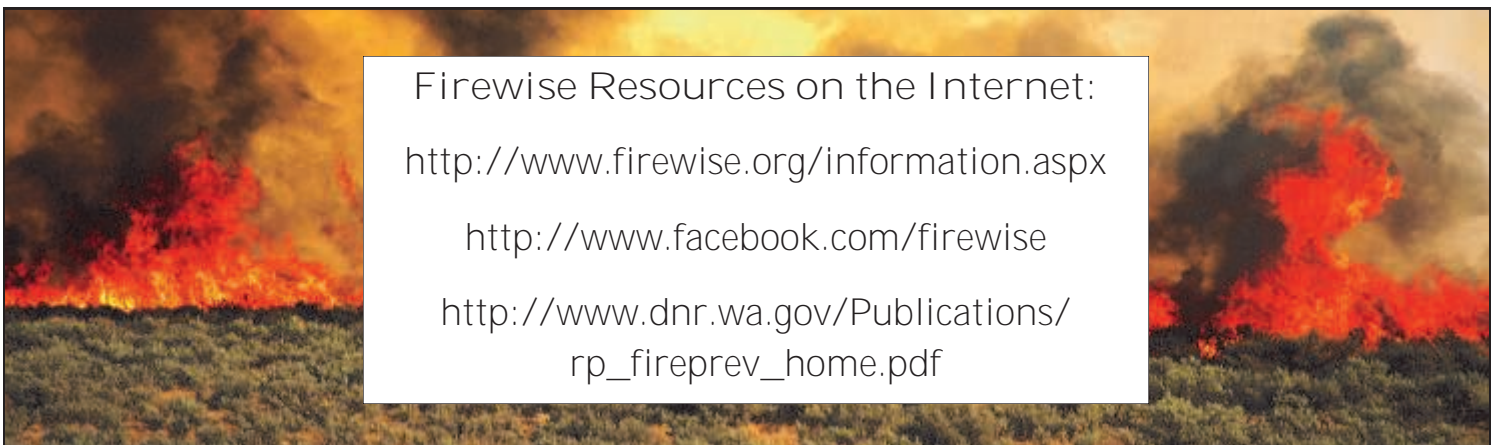
Wildfire preparedness help is available all year long at the Okanogan Conservation District. Call or email to find out how we can assist you in meeting your Firewise goals. The time to prepare is now.

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



Testing Cover Crops on Dryland Farms

By Leslie Michel, Okanogan Conservation District

Cover crops and their benefits have been promoted by scientists and growers for years in other regions of the United States. Cover crops can help increase organic matter, water infiltration, aggregate stability, and soil microbial activity, improve soil fertility, suppress weed populations, aid in erosion control, and increase yields.



Cover crops can reduce erosion on farmland.

Cover crops have been utilized extensively in the Midwest and the eastern U.S., where summer precipitation is prevalent. Growers in the Pacific Northwest have become aware of these benefits and are curious as to whether cover crops are beneficial in our winter precipitation climate. Rainfall patterns in Eastern Washington differ vastly from those in the Midwest and East. Currently, there is no information on cover crops in Eastern Washington in the low-rainfall regions to guide growers. Because cover crops have not been evaluated in the 8 to 12-inch, non-irrigated rainfall zone, growers have been hesitant to integrate them into their production systems.



Nitrogen-fixers enrich soil while protecting it.

The Okanogan Conservation District has received funding from Regional Approaches to Climate Change (REACCH), which is a coordinated agricultural project to improve the long-term profitability of cereal production systems in the Pacific Northwest. We will be conducting a replicated cover-crop trial on T3 Ranch in Okanogan. Since moisture is the number one concern in our area, we will be monitoring moisture throughout the season to see what effects the cover crop will have.



Funded through Award #2011-68002-30191 from USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture

Okanogan Conservation District is partnering with Washington State University Extension and Rainier Seeds in Davenport. If you **are interested in keeping apprised of the the District's activities** regarding cover crops and soil health, please contact Leslie Michel at lesliem@okanogancd.org or (509) 422-0855 extension 126.



Okanogan River Pump Screens – Get Yours Now!

Bob Clark, Okanogan Conservation District

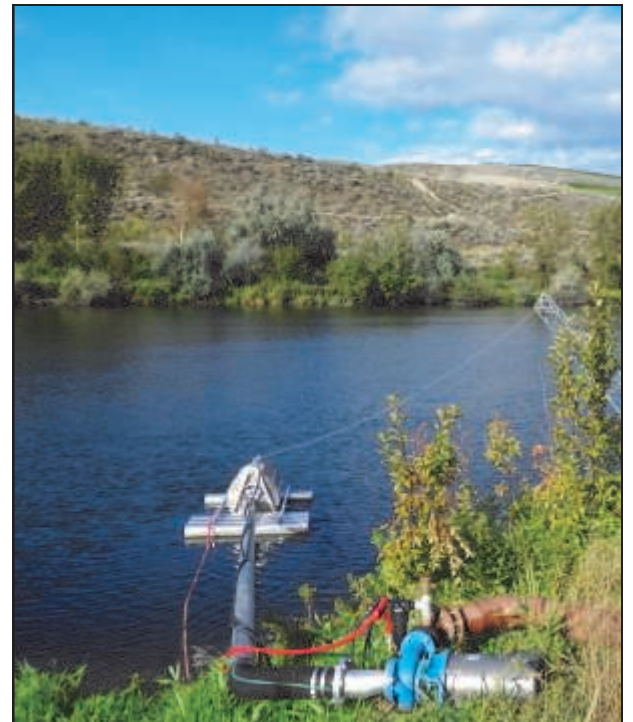
You probably put a screen on the end of your pump intake pipe to keep debris out of your irrigation system. Depending upon the size of the openings in the screen, it may be serving its intended purpose. However, you may have to pull it out of the water constantly and scrub off the moss and algae that accumulates and blocks adequate flow. Maybe the screen is just worn out or corroded. Whatever the reason, your screen has seen better days and is no longer functioning the way you would like.

Because it is no longer very functional, your screen also may not be what is needed to comply with regulatory standards to protect threatened and endangered fish species. Standards have become more stringent in recent years, so even if you installed a screen with openings that were the correct size a number of years ago, the screen may not meet current standards. So, not only is your screen not meeting your needs, it could make you subject to regulatory action (fines).

If you are pumping water from the Okanogan River and have a screen as described above (or have no screen), the Okanogan Conservation District has a program that can pay for a new screen and its installation. The District has been methodically contacting irrigators over the past several years and arranging for new screen installations at pumping sites identified by a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife survey. The District will continue this process, but if you believe your screen needs replacing, you do not need to wait for the District to contact you. You could get a new one sooner by contacting the District directly. That way, you could get a screen that could function better for you as well as meet current fish-friendly screen standards. Contact Bob Clark at (509) 422-0855 extension 122 or bobc@okanogancd.org to arrange a site visit and pump screen assessment.



Creative solutions like this one usually only work for a limited time.



Take advantage of 100% funding to replace failing screens with high quality equipment that protects fish and pumps.

The Okanogan Conservation District wishes to thank the owners of Filaree Farm in Okanogan for hosting the North Central Washington Regional Envirothon Competition on April 30th. **This “knowledge bowl for natural resources” brings high school teams from Okanogan, Chelan, Douglas, and Grant Counties to compete for a spot in the Washington State Envirothon in May.**

Supervisor Spotlight: Lorah Super

Lorah lives on a solar powered farm in the lower Methow Valley with husband Don and daughter Lillian. They raise and train work horses and pack animals for use with their small scale logging and outfitting business. The Supers also participate annually in Cavalry training and re-enactments at the Little Bighorn Battlefield. Lorah has been actively involved in a variety of forestry efforts since 2002, primarily focused on rebuilding value-added infrastructure, community wildfire planning, and assisting landowners to accomplish forest management goals. She joined the Okanogan Conservation District Board of Supervisors on May 20, 2010.



How did you first hear about the Conservation District?

In 2003, I was invited by Tom Doran [former board supervisor] to a meeting about the Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) process and how it might assist different planning efforts in the Methow. **In the years that followed, in my capacity as manager of the Methow Forest Owners' Co-op** and project manager for Okanogan Communities Development Council, I worked with Bob Anderson and Laura Clark [former District staff] for several years on forest management, community wildfire planning issues, and related grant proposals.

What convinced you to join the board?

Having worked with the District previously, I found the organization to be competent and professional. I **liked that they were getting work done “on the ground” while simultaneously planning ahead and working well with a diversity of interests.**

What keeps you engaged and motivated to volunteer your time?

It's a great group to work with. I appreciate the experience and contributions of my fellow board members, and I am honored to work with an outstanding staff. For the effort I put in, I am rewarded by consistent progress and follow-**through from everyone involved. It's a self-reinforcing** feedback loop.

What do you think are the key accomplishments since you've been on the board?

- Hiring new staff that add significantly to our combined skill set and the services we have to offer;
- Successfully working with DNR on Firewise and getting more landowners on board;
- **Moving the Plant Sale from a “loss leader” to a well-attended event that is starting to generate revenue and recognition.**

What do you want to see for the future of the organization?

I'd like to see the District actively working in forestry again. I hope to build on the Firewise education process and the good working relationship we have with DNR to expand the resources and opportunities available to help landowners implement their own forest management goals. We should also continue to participate actively in the larger conversation related to managing public lands and building infrastructure.

Concerned About River Bank Erosion? Call Us!

If you have land along the Okanogan and Similkameen rivers between Oroville and Tonasket and are worried about the stability of your river banks, we want to hear from you. We can work with you to explore options that protect farm assets, respect natural river processes, reduce effects on downstream neighbors and increase habitat for salmon and other fish. Several Best Management Practices, from fencing to planting, can be implemented to reduce erosion and improve water quality. Call Terri Williams at (509) 422-0855 extension 105 or email terriw@okanogancd.org for more information.



Manager's Note...

Craig Nelson, Okanogan Conservation District

Spring is in the air, mud is on our boots, and great plans dance in the minds of farmers and gardeners alike! I have always enjoyed the season of rebirth, growth, and expanding light.

Seeds are, or are about to, separate and new shoots will push through the upper layer of soil to reach the warming and life giving sun. Soils are filling with moisture between snow melt and spring rains to fill the fuel tank for the growing season ahead. Wild and domestic animals alike are bearing the next generation of beautiful and majestic creatures that are taking those initially weak but rapidly strengthening first steps. Spring is the time of year we all think, new, fresh starts, great and grand ideas. While we may have celebrated the New Year according to the calendar a couple of months ago, many are getting that fresh start on a new year going now. We are getting our seeds ready, our planting equipment from shovels to seed drills ready, pruning our ornamentals and fruit trees, and taking stock of a myriad of other activities that are necessary.

We are just as excited to have spring upon us as everyone else. Our staff is itching to get outside and work with landowners one on one to help you develop plans, implement conservation practices, and generally provide you with the voluntary natural resource conservation advice many of come to know and trust.

Save the Dates!

The Washington State Conservation Commission will be meeting for two days in Okanogan County this July. Join us for the following events:

July 16, 2014

1-5 pm: Tour various conservation projects in the Okanogan area

6-8 pm: Dinner (Location to be decided)

July 17, 2014

9:00 am-4:00 pm : Regular Meeting

Location: Commissioners Hearing Room, 123 Fifth Avenue North, Okanogan, WA

Okanogan Conservation District
1251 S. 2nd Avenue, Room 102
Okanogan, WA 98840

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID PERMIT #1
WENATCHEE WA

Visit us online!

Okanogan Conservation District
www.okanogancd.org

WSU Okanogan County Extension
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 extension 5

WSU Okanogan County Extension

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

Resource Quarterly

is published by the Okanogan Conservation District with partial funding from Washington State Conservation Commission, Washington State Department of Ecology, and various other sources.