

Palouse News

Conserving the Palouse together

Spring 2018

Office hours Monday-Friday 8:30-4:30pm

509.332.4101 · www.palousecd.org · pcd@palousecd.org



Annual Meeting Kicks Off Palouse CD Long-Range Planning

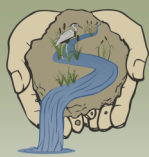
By Jennifer Boie, Palouse CD Director

The Palouse Conservation District is in the process of writing a new 5-Year Plan to span 2020-2025. The 2018 Annual Meeting was the kickoff for our long-range planning. We had a great turnout for the Annual Meeting including 50 producers/landowners/local residents and 20 partners/staff. The focus of the evening was to provide direction for the Board of Supervisors as they work with staff to determine focus programs and services that the Palouse CD can offer to the local community. Thank you to all who attended! If you were not able to attend the Annual Meeting, you can still participate by answering the following questions:

1. 5 years from now, how, in one word, would you describe the Palouse Conservation District?
2. 5 years from now, what will be the greatest accomplishment of the Palouse Conservation District?
3. If there were only so many resources (money, time, energy, community support, etc.) available, what natural resource concerns or issues would you address?
4. If there were only so many resources (money, time, energy, community support, etc.) available, what geographic area would you want PCD to prioritize/address in their work?
5. If you were ruler for a day, on what do you want the Palouse Conservation District Board to concentrate as they develop their draft long-range plan?

Please go to our website at palousecd.org to fill out our anonymous survey form or send your responses by mail to 1615 NE Eastgate Blvd Section H, Pullman, WA, 99163.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us as we draft our 5-Year Plan for 2020-2025. We will be holding another public meeting this fall/winter to share a draft of the plan with the community. Please email palousecd@palousecd.org if you would like to be added to our contact list to receive notice of upcoming meetings.



14th Annual Pullman Stream Clean-Up

Saturday April 21, 2018 10am—1pm

Spring Street Park, next to the skate park



Join Palouse CD and City of Pullman Stormwater Services in celebrating Earth Day! Enjoy a day walking along Pullman streams with your neighbors, removing litter and recyclables from local waterways, in an effort to keep Pullman green and clean. This event will take place rain or shine so dress appropriately. Be sure to join us afterwards for refreshments and lunch from our sponsors! **Register at: www.palousecd.org/pullman-stream-cleanup**

Several local Growers were highlighted at a recent event focusing on cropping strategies to improve soil health. The Palouse Alternative Cropping Symposium was held February 23 at the Gladish Community Center in Pullman. The event was hosted by the Palouse Conservation District with funding from the Washington State Soil Health Committee.

Conversations about soil health are happening across the nation, but what works in other places may not necessarily work here on the Palouse.

What we hear from our growers is that they want to see what other folks are trying. This event provided a forum for growers who are diversifying their crop rotations and seeing economic returns to share what they are trying. By sharing what works—and more importantly what doesn't work—other growers can catch a glimpse of some innovative ideas that diversify beyond the traditional wheat crop rotation.

Short presentations included Tedd Neally (LaCrosse), Dan Harwood (Palouse Rock Lake Conservation District), Ty Meyer (Red Barn Farms), Clint Zenner (Zenner Family Farm), Allen Druffel (Druffel Farm) and Drew Leitch (Leitch Farms). In between presentations, long breaks provided ample time to develop new relationships and to catch up with neighbors. The room hummed with vibrant discussion as people continued conversations prompted by the presentations throughout the day.

Looking down the road, the Palouse Conservation District hopes to develop cost-share programs that can help to offset the costs of alternative cropping practices, improving the soil and decreasing the amount of off-farm inputs.

If you are interested in cost-share assistance to plant a cover crops, we are currently accepting applications through our Palouse River Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Applications are ranked and if selected, growers can receive cost-share on up to 25 acres of cover crop enrolled through EQIP for up to 3 years, at \$2,500 a year, totaling \$7,500. We also have a small drill seeder (7 ½' head) available for small scale projects. Give us a call if you are interested, **Lovina Englund 509-332-4101 x 103**.



Cropping Symposium Highlights Local Growers

By Loving Englund, Agricultural Resources Coordinator



Volunteers Make It Possible

By Matt Jasper, AmeriCorps Watershed Restoration and Education Technician

Our volunteer planting events have been a massive success over this past fall and spring. We have a weekly volunteer event with WSU's Center for Civic Engagement throughout the semester, where student volunteers have been instrumental in the success of project plantings. WSU fraternities have also been volunteering their Saturdays to help shape a healthy environment on the Palouse. With the combined efforts of these community volunteers, along with WSU student interns, we successfully planted hundreds of riparian plants that helped to reduce soil erosion, increase water quality, and improve wildlife habitat. Keeping the community involved in these projects is one of our goals at the Palouse Conservation District and we would be thrilled to welcome new community volunteers. **Contact Matt at 509-332-4101 ext. 118 or AmeriCorps@palousecd.org**. With help from the community, we will continue making the Palouse Watershed a happy and healthy ecosystem!

RCPP Program Opens Opportunities for Landowners

By Stephen Johnson, Regional Conservation Partnership Program Coordinator

The Palouse River Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), in its third year now, has assisted over 40 landowners to achieve conservation goals on their land. For one 5th generation farmer, that meant being able to experiment with different farming practices, with the funding provided by the program. *"Initially, I used the funding (>\$40/acre) to hire no-till seeding done at \$25 per acre. However, then I began to figure out the cost of that for 3 years and decided to study purchasing a small no-till machine of my own."* Participating in the RCPP program helped speed up his purchasing decision of this equipment by over 5 years, he noted.



Direct seed drill purchased after experimenting with direct seeding, utilizing cost-share funding from RCPP.



Palouse Conservation District field crew planting at wetland site.

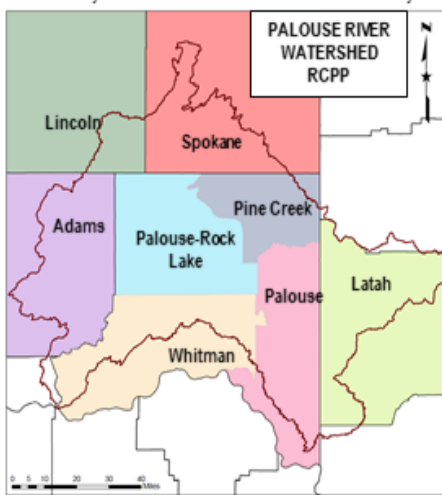
A 3rd generation landowner, who restored a wetland on her property, was interested in the RCPP because she wanted to conserve the water on the site, and *"encourage other uses that the wetland could offer."* The site had historically been hayed, and was too wet to farm, even though attempts were made to drain it. *"I felt I was doing nothing to conserve the resources that I had a privilege to."* With the help of her local conservation district and funding through the RCPP, a tile line was crushed to bring water back to the wetland, and the conservation district crew helped the landowner plant native shrubs and forbs. *"The RCPP program had people who could offer the expertise to transition the area into a conservation project for the next 15 years, and they provided some monetary incentives to do so."*

For both landowners, this was their first time working with their local conservation districts. In its third year now, RCPP is a program that covers the entire Palouse River drainage, including areas of Whitman, Latah, Spokane, Lincoln, and Adams counties. Authorized under the 2014 Farm Bill and directed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), RCPP acts as a one-stop shop for landowners to receive assistance that is tailored to their specific conservation goals, with funding allocated from multiple sources. Looking back at her wetland project, the landowner remarked *"I find farmers and my family to be very concerned about soil erosion, conserving water, clean air and rivers, and maintaining wildlife in the Palouse. We want a prosperous future for the next generation."*

Landowners interested in doing conservation work on their land should contact their local conservation district for assistance. Proposed projects can range from livestock practices to cover crops to precision nutrient management, among others, with the main goals being direct seed and buffers on streams. **May 31st is the last day to sign up for the RCPP program.** More information can be found at: www.palousecd.org/rcpp or call Stephen at 509-332-4101 x 116 or Janessa at ext. 117.

**Are you a landowner or producer in the Palouse River Watershed?
Are you interested in Direct Seed or Riparian Buffers?
We are here to HELP!**

The PALOUSE RIVER WATERSHED REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP) can help provide funding for your project. Applications for assistance are due **by May 31st, 2018**. For more information regarding eligibility and assistance, be sure to contact your local Conservation District today!



Adams CD
(509) 659-1553
Lincoln CD
(509) 725-4181
Palouse CD
(509) 332-4101
Pine Creek CD
(509) 285-5122
Palouse-Rock Lake CD
(509) 648-3680
Spokane CD
(509) 535-7274
Whitman CD
(509) 288-4644
Latah NRCS
(208) 882-4960
Or visit online at
www.palousecd.org/rcpp

Whitman County Voluntary Stewardship Program

By Brad Johnson, WRIA 35 Watershed Planning and Implementation Manager

The Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is a collaborative process that helps Washington communities ensure healthy landscapes and strong farms and ranches into the future. Thanks to the help from local residents and technical agencies, the Whitman County VSP Work Plan was approved by the Washington State Conservation Commission on August 7, 2017. This Work Plan identifies stewardship strategies for agricultural viability and five critical areas composed of wetlands, frequently flooded areas, fish and wildlife conservation areas, critical aquifer recharge areas and geologically hazardous areas.

The Whitman County VSP Work Group selected the Palouse Conservation District as the VSP Coordinator to work with Whitman, Pine Creek, Palouse Rock-Lake Conservation Districts, Whitman County Cattlemen's Association, Whitman County Farm Bureau and the Whitman County Association of Wheat Growers to provide technical assistance to producers and implement the Work Plan. The Work Plan outlines goals and objectives for stewardship practices that will protect and/or restore critical areas on private property. Steward practices include, but are not limited to, residue and tillage management, filter strips, prescribed grazing, and vegetation for habitat. Conservation Districts, agriculture groups and the Work Group will identify voluntary cost-share practices that will help offset the costs to landowners interested in stewardship strategies. Landowners who have previously worked to protect and/or restore areas on their own, are encouraged to self-report stewardship practices to the Conservation Districts, Cattlemen's Association, Farm Bureau, or the Association of Wheat Growers in Whitman County so that their actions can be documented and included in the reporting processes listed above.

The Conservation Districts, Cattlemen's Association, Farm Bureau and Wheat Growers can provide technical assistance to interested landowners to complete individual Stewardship Plans, which will be confidential and only report stewardship practices by date, watershed, project type, metrics and critical areas protected or restored if landowners are interested in reporting. This information will be used during the reporting timelines listed above to

ensure stewardship strategies and practices are resulting in critical area protections and/or restoration and that agricultural viability is maintained.


Whitman County VSP can only be successful with the voluntary participation by landowners within the County. The roles of the local Work Group, Conservation Districts, Cattlemen's Association, Farm Bureau and Association of Wheat Growers in Whitman County, are to work with interested landowners to provide technical assistance and potential cost-share for stewardship practices. Voluntary stewardship practices will then be tracked and reported to demonstrate how individual actions are collectively maintaining agricultural viability while protecting critical areas. We look forward to working with interested landowners to identify current or future funding or providing technical assistance with producers who want to self-fund stewardship practices for protecting and/or restoring critical areas while maintaining the long-term viability of agriculture in Whitman County. More information on critical areas, stewardship strategies, eligible stewardship practices, and timelines are available by visiting www.whitmancountyvsp.com.

Looking to address stewardship practices on your farm or ranch while protecting agricultural viability?

Check out the Whitman County Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)!

VSP provides an innovative approach to protecting critical areas on agricultural lands that enhance our environment, through voluntary measures, while promoting agriculture in Whitman County. VSP allows farmers and ranchers more flexibility in either using programs or self-funding stewardship strategies to protect and/or restore critical areas. VSP also collects previous and on-going project data from all projects that landowners want to report, which will document participation and the importance of agriculture viability. Visit www.whitmancountyvsp.com for more information.

Critical areas include:




These technical providers look forward to working for you!

Palouse CD (509) 332-4101	Palouse-Rock Lake CD (509) 648-3680
Pine Creek CD (509) 285-5122	Whitman CD (509) 288-4644
Whitman County Farm Bureau	Whitman County Cattlemen Association
Whitman County Association of Wheat Growers	



Meet the 2018 Riparian Restoration Field Crew

By Zachary Carter, Riparian Restoration Field Crew Lead

Riparian areas are defined as the green band of vegetation growing adjacent to a waterway separating the channel from upland vegetation. These areas are home to litany wildlife, vegetation, and provide food and shelter for fish and aquatic insects. Riparian plants such as sedges, rushes, willows, and cottonwoods play a vital role in supporting the health of a stream. Benefits of healthy streams are vast and include filtration of pollutants, buffering of flood water, and recreational opportunities. Over time though, these important areas have been disappearing from the landscape.



Due to land management decisions and the arrival of exotic invasive plants many of these riparian areas have been negatively impacted. The important functions that the vegetation serves have diminished and stream health has declined. However, all is not lost! Riparian vegetation is tenacious and can readily recover in a degraded area, with some assistance. The reincorporation of native vegetation, removal of invasive plants, and protection of degraded banks all serve to breathe life back into our waterways. The riparian restoration field crew is excited to work alongside land owners and project planners with the goal of repairing these important areas.

The riparian restoration crew is staffed by four crew members including **Emma Squires, Maria Garcia, Sean Murphy, Dylan Lips,** and **crew lead Zack Carter.** The team is comprised of people from around the country wanting to improve the health and condition of riparian areas in the Palouse region. Crew members have a diverse background with experience in native plant restoration, natural resources, plant identification, small engine repair, and trail building. Crew members may have wide-ranging backgrounds but all of them share a similar vision of sustained healthy riparian areas for future generations.

The crew has already started planting plugs and bare root plants on both the South Fork and Four Mile Creek taking advantage of the moist soil conditions of late winter/early spring and will continue to plant through the spring season. As warmer summer conditions approach the crew will focus their attention on fortifying current and former revegetation efforts through invasive plant reduction and removal. Additionally, the crew will install in-stream woody structures in order to create floodplain areas and to protect degrading banks. Lastly, through the use of hydraulic drills, the crew will be installing six foot willow cuttings along several channels in the Palouse.

Next time you see the crew in the field, feel free to stop by and say hello! We are all excited to be part of the effort to restore riparian areas and love meeting landowners and members of the public.



Meet Anthony Hatcher

Research and Monitoring Technician

Anthony began working for the District in January 2018. After receiving his bachelor's degree in Ecology from Appalachian State University, he travelled around the country working for several federal, state, and non-profit conservation agencies and has eight years of diverse experience in natural resource monitoring, botany, restoration, and rangeland management. During a previous position working to install and monitor the effectiveness of riparian buffers on private lands just across the state line in Idaho, Anthony became very interested in conservation on the Palouse which lead him here to the district. As the Research and Monitoring Technician, Anthony works to collect and analyze water quality, soil health, and wildlife habitat data in order

to quantify the effectiveness of conservation practices such as conservation tillage and riparian buffers in the Palouse River watershed. When not out in the field or in the office, he enjoys hiking, fishing, and backpacking with his family and friends.



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Visit our webpage!

www.palousecd.org

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please sign-up by subscribing on our webpage,
calling the district, or sending an email to
palousecd@palousecd.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April

10 Palouse Conservation District Board Meeting 6pm

Palouse CD Office, Pullman

21 14th Annual Pullman Stream Clean-Up 10am—1pm

Spring Street Park, Pullman

24 SE Regional High School Envirothon 9:30am—2pm

Klemgard Park, Colfax

27 Developing a Grazing Plan: Workshop for Livestock Owners and Land Managers 9am—3pm

NRCS Conference Room, 1848 South Mountain View Road, Moscow, ID

Come learn new tools and techniques on improving pastures and forage by setting goals and assessing resources. Registration: Mail \$20 check to Latah County Extension at 200 South Almon, Moscow, ID 83843. Questions? Contact Lovina Englund, lovina@palousecd.org, 509-332-4101 x 103.

May 12 and June 9

Steptoe Butte Botany Blitz 8am—4pm

Steptoe Butte, Steptoe

Come spend the day helping local botanists collect plant specimens while surveying Steptoe Butte's plant diversity. No experience necessary. Contact James Riser at botanist@palousecd.org for more information.

Board of Supervisors

Larry Cochran, Chair (1990)

Keith Kopf (1997)

Chris Heitstuman (1998)

Mark Whitmore (1998)

Mary Collins (2017)

Associate Board Members: Vacant

Thank you to the following businesses for sponsoring the 2018 Annual Meeting:

Ackerman Heating and Air Conditioning, Bell Equipment, CHS Primeland, Columbia Straw, Four Star Supply, Galexis Technologies, Helena, Jess Ford of Pullman, Jones Truck and Implement, McGregor, Merry Cellars, Pearson Farm and Fence, Perfection Tire, St. John Hardware and Implement, Uniontown Coop Association, and Wilbur-Ellis.