

Palouse Pulse

Quarterly newsletter of Palouse Conservation District · Spring 2021

Local solutions for your conservation goals



48

Farms committed to
direct seeding



25,000

Acres of direct seeding
over 3 years

*"Appreciate being
able to note
differences between
fields... See what the
practice of direct
seeding actually does
for our soil and the
environment
compared to being
conventionally
farmed."*

Direct Seed Cost Share Available, Apply by March 26th

Helps offset conservation costs to protect soil and improve water quality

TAMI STUBBS, CONSERVATION COORDINATOR



Palouse Conservation District has cost share funding available this spring for growers who are interesting in trying direct seeding, through grant funding from Washington Department of Ecology. Direct seeding refers to a farming practice where tillage is eliminated and the crop is planted and fertilized with only one soil-disturbing pass over the field. With direct seeding, there is reduced soil disturbance compared to conventional farming systems. Crop residue from the previous year is preserved on the soil surface and root systems remain intact below-ground to protect soil from erosion. Additional benefits of direct seeding include reduced fuel consumption by farm equipment, decreased dust, increased soil organic matter and improved water infiltration. Cost share assistance helps growers to offset the expense associated with the challenges of transitioning from farming with high disturbance tillage to direct seeding. Using grant funding, growers are reimbursed for the cost of renting the specialized drills needed to seed and fertilize the rolling hills of the Palouse.

In addition to direct seeding, there is a pilot project underway to implement precision nutrient management with soil nutrient testing, zone mapping of fields and variable rate fertilizer application. Two farms will be testing the program over three years, in hopes that more acres can be included in future grant applications. This past year, a second pilot program was offered to implement cover crops in place of fallow. Planting cover crops in place of fallow has the potential to decrease soil erosion, improve soil health by increasing soil organic matter, increase water infiltration with tap roots that break through compacted layers and reduce herbicide use by suppressing weeds; however, additional research is needed to ensure this is a viable practice for farmers in the traditional fallow areas of Whitman County.

To be eligible for direct seed cost share assistance, growers must:

- Farm within Whitman County
- Do not already own a no-till drill
- Willing to commit to one-pass seeding for three years.

Funds are intended to offset the cost of drill rental or custom seeding.

Deadline to apply is March 26, 2021.

The Washington Department of Ecology Water Quality Program grants are intended to help landowners and farm operators protect and improve water quality in Whitman County rivers and streams by reducing runoff of soil and nutrients from farm fields. For more information, contact Tami Stubbs at (509) 332-4101 ext. 111 or TamiS@palousecd.org.

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COMPLIMENTARY
T-SHIRT & WATER
BOTTLE!

16TH ANNUAL PULLMAN STREAM CLEAN-UP

Socially Distanced • Limited Participants

Select Dates and Times

Available in April



For more information visit
www.givepulse.com/event/226680

Interested in helping to keep our streams clean year-round?
Learn more about the Adopt-A-Stream program at www.PalouseCD.org!



Grande Ronde Guardians for Kids!

To encourage water resource literacy on the Palouse and the current state of our aquifer levels, third and fifth grade students in Pullman, Palouse, and Garfield School Districts will participate in hands-on educational lessons and programming through videos and self-paced guides. Due to COVID-19, all in-person instruction has been cancelled and all of our educational programming is administered distantly in collaboration with teachers. Programming will focus on water quality

impacts including stormwater, agricultural runoff from nutrients and sediment, and erosion control along riparian corridors, as well as testing water quality parameters and considering behavioral changes to conserve water at home and school. Third grade students who complete their activity book will be eligible for a raffle prize!

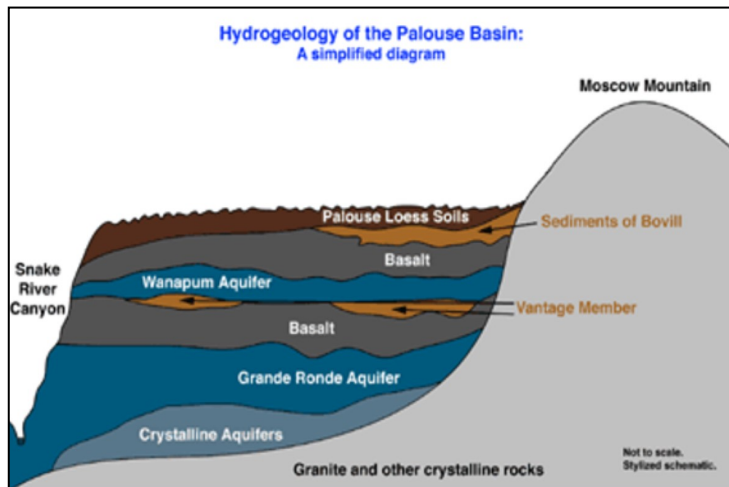
We will also be hosting a K-12 art contest for all students in Whitman County with the theme "A Day Without Water." Prizes available. More information at www.palousecd.org/water-conservation.

Know Your Flow!

Dropping groundwater levels is a community effort

ELIZABETH SEBO,
EDUCATION & OUTREACH SPECIALIST

Water is a precious resource here on the Palouse. Our communities rely entirely on groundwater sources for drinking water and our surface waters have become contaminated with non-point source pollutants from agricultural and urban runoff. The Grande Ronde and Wanapum aquifers are the largest aquifers in our region. They are confined, meaning that there is an impermeable layer of substrate that prevents water from entering and recharging the aquifers.



The rate at which we pump water from our aquifers is greater than the rate that water is added to them. As a result, our aquifers continue to decline and conservation efforts become increasingly more important. To learn more about the state of our aquifers, visit the Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee's website at palousebasin.org.

To engage the community in thinking of ways that each of us can reduce our water use, we will be hosting Know Your Flow, a water use campaign, throughout the month of April. From attending one of our workshops to participating in social media challenges, there are lots of ways to get involved. Visit www.palousecd.org/water-conservation for more information.

Sign up for our workshops!

April 7th | Everyday Water Conservation

Month of April | How to Build a Rain Barrel

The first workshop participants to register will be eligible to receive FREE at-home kits. Please note that kits are limited and registering early does not guarantee you will receive a kit. Register at www.PalouseCD.org.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN KNOW YOUR FLOW

APRIL 2021

TAKE PART IN SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES

Be sure to follow us on Instagram and Facebook to keep up with our weekly social media challenges for the chance to win raffle prizes!



HELP OUT WITH VOLUNTEER EVENTS

Sign up for a volunteer slot during our month-long Stream Clean-Up Event and do your part to keep our waters free from pollution!



ATTEND WORKSHOPS

Check out our Water Conservation and Rain Barrel Workshops to learn more about water conservation and sign up to receive some awesome at-home kits!



CONSERVE WATER!

Read through the resources listed on the PCD Water Conservation webpage for helpful ideas on how to be a better water steward!

Visit www.palousecd.org/water-conservation for more information.

Waste Not, Want Not

Reduce food waste and bring scraps back to life

CAILIN O'MALLEY, RESEARCH AND MONITORING TECHNICIAN

Limiting and reusing food waste is one way to make a difference in the environment and in your budget. Here are some quick pointers on how to stretch every dollar and utilize your produce beyond the kitchen.

1. Before heading to the grocery store, raid the fridge and pantry.

If you aren't sure what to do with what you already have, try using websites or apps like Plant Jammer and Yummly that automatically generate recipes based on the items left in your fridge or pantry. You are able to utilize the food you already have as well as try out some new dishes that could become favorites.

2. Make your list and stay focused.

Get out a pen and paper, your notes on the phone, or one of the previously mentioned apps and make your grocery list. It is helpful to write down specific amounts you'll need and try to stick to it. It is tempting to overbuy with the idea that you are getting a good deal on bulk items. This works to an extent for non-perishable items like rice or flour, but be wary when it comes to perishables. While you may get a good deal initially, if you end up throwing some of it out you lose those benefits.

3. Get creative in the kitchen.

There may be produce that you only need part of in your recipe. However, the rest does not necessarily need to be thrown out. For example, you can make carrot top pesto, add sautéed beet greens to an omelet, or whip up some candied citrus peels. Another common solution to vegetable scraps is to make a broth. You can stick to a vegetable broth or add some leftover bones in the pot too.

4. If you can't eat it, try to re-grow it.

There's a long list of vegetables and herbs that can grow from scraps. Usually all it takes a little bowl of water, sunlight, and enough of the rooting section of the plant for the plant to begin forming new roots and sprouts. From there you can transplant the rooting vegetable or herb to a container or directly in the soil if you have a garden. Otherwise, you can harvest the new growth as you please.

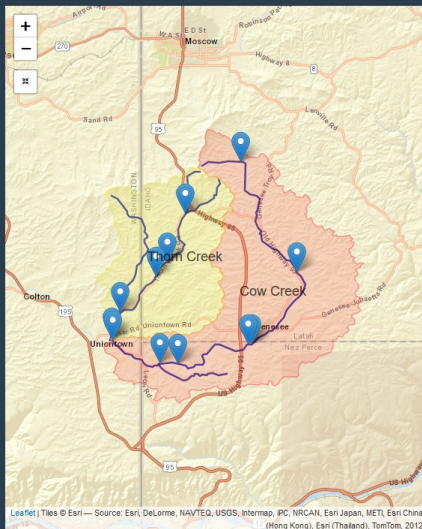
5. If it's too far gone, send it to the compost.

While it would be ideal to eat up absolutely everything you buy or grow, there are usually scraps that won't cut it. That doesn't mean they are no longer useful. Food scraps of fruits and vegetables are important sources of energy for composting. To learn more about the wonders of composting, join us for our next Conservation Talk Series on **Thursday, March 11th at 6pm via Zoom** where **Dr. Lynne Carpenter-Boggs** will share her expertise in her talk, **Composting for Farms and Gardens**. Participants will be eligible to win a composting tumbler, courtesy of the National Association of Conservation Districts.



Water Quality Monitoring

Use map below to view most current measurements collected. Click on a point to view data. Use buttons on the upper left corner to zoom/reset map view



Did you know that we have years of local water quality data published on our website? Data is available for the North and South Forks of the Palouse River and their tributaries: Cow and Thorn Creeks (near Uniontown), Kamiache and Thorn creeks (near St. John), as well as Steptoe Creek. The goal of PCD's Research and Monitoring program is to assess long-term trends in water quality, soil health, and habitat associated with voluntary incentive-based conservation practices.

WE ARE HIRING

Finance and Administration Specialist

See a full position description and
instructions on how to apply at
www.PalouseCD.org



PCD CONSERVATION TALK SERIES

NATIVE PLANTS IN THE LANDSCAPE

THURSDAY, MARCH 25TH AT 6:00 PM

WITH KATHY HUTTON, PLANTS OF THE WILD

JOIN US TO LEARN HOW TO USE NATIVE
PLANTS IN YOUR NEXT LANDSCAPING
PROJECT. THE FIRST 25 PARTICIPANTS
WILL RECEIVE A **FREE** XERISCAPING KIT!

This talk is free and open to the public. It will
be hosted via Zoom.

To register, please visit:

www.PalouseCD.org/Conservation-Talk-Series



Partner Projects Historical Map

Over the past 22 years, PCD has implemented conservation practices throughout the Palouse River Watershed in partnership with many agencies, through different funding sources, and in collaboration with a multitude of landowners. A newly-created Story Map highlights the different types of restoration work we do, the history of our funding for such work, and where within the watershed those projects have been implemented.

Check out the Story Map on our home page at www.PalouseCD.org. We hope you enjoy exploring the history of conservation on the Palouse as we look forward to the future of conservation work ahead of us.



Commodity Buffer Program

Program protects our waterways and keeps your farm profitable

ANTHONY HATCHER,
CONSERVATION COORDINATOR

Are you interested in planting a buffer? Are you interested in planting a buffer along the streams, draws or wet areas of your farm? Do you have a buffer already installed for which you would be interested in receiving compensation? If so, The Palouse Conservation District is currently accepting applications for the Commodity Buffer Program.

The Commodity Buffer Program is unlike any other conservation initiative in the nation. Initially started by the Spokane Conservation District, the **Commodity Buffer Program incentivizes producers to plant riparian buffers and take land out of crop production by compensating them for what the land is actually worth.** A customized price model based on the USDA Risk Management Agency's projected prices for the adjacent crop is used to compensate producers a similar commodity price per acre they would receive for cropping the buffer area taken out of production. Payment rates change yearly based on the crop planted adjacent to the buffer with a guaranteed minimum payment of \$200 per acre on eligible acres per year.

Required buffer widths are based on stream type and upland tillage practices with lower soil disturbance tillage practices having smaller width requirements. There is great flexibility in what producers can plant in the buffer including hay crops, native grasses, pollinator plantings, or full forest buffers. Once installed, the buffer can be hayed or grazed after July 1, to avoid the critical grassland bird nesting season.

To participate in the program, one has to:

- Farm in the Palouse River Watershed
- Maintain the installed buffer for three years
- Meet the minimal buffer width based on tillage practice and stream type

Previously planted buffers also have to meet program requirements in order to be eligible. Sign up for the program is currently continuous. However, **due to limited funding, is on a first come first serve basis** and will be concluded once all funding is allocated. To apply for the program or for more information, contact Anthony Hatcher at (509) 332-4101 ext. 113 or AnthonyH@palousecd.org.

No one knows your land better than you

Share your agricultural stewardship with the Voluntary Stewardship Program

BRADLEY JOHNSON, MIDDLE SNAKE WATERSHED MANAGER

The Whitman County Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) Five-Year Status Review was submitted in January 2021. By producers choosing to share their stewardship story through the VSP Action Map that document stewardship strategies protecting and restoring critical natural resource areas, we were able to show that protection and enhancement goals outline in the Whitman County VSP Work Plan are being met or exceeded for 2021. We are on track to meet our goals for 2026 but we can't do it without your help!

As an alternative to the Growth Management Act, VSP is an innovative approach for reporting the protection of critical areas, such as highly erodible lands, wetlands, frequently flooded areas, and fish and wild habitat, on agriculture lands. VSP works under the assumption that complex environmental problems can be solved through voluntary cooperation. The program hopes to demonstrate that voluntary stewardship works in Whitman County, while also promoting the viability of agriculture. Participating in VSP reduces regulation and maintains local control and more certainty, gives landowners more flexibility in solving problems, and promotes a positive image of agriculture. Many producers are taking action to help protect these areas, without realizing it. Stewardship strategies might include:

- Tillage management plan using a no till, direct seed or single pass system
- Pest management practice, including weed control
- Nutrient management practice: soil or plant tissue tests
- Managed grazing and livestock fencing
- Conservation crop rotation
- Cover crops
- Permanent conservation vegetative cover
- Planting vegetation to stabilize eroding land
- Grassed waterways or streambank protection
- Tree or shrub establishment
- Wildlife management in wetlands or upland habitat

We need your help to tell the story that voluntary stewardship can protect critical areas. VSP is the story book. Landowners, farmers and ranchers are the story tellers. Any information you report will be reported at a watershed scale, keeping all landowner contact information private. You may choose to have your stewardship actions public or private but all personal information remains confidential.

Reporting is right at your fingertips! Share your story of stewardship at WhitmanCountyVSP.com or call Bradley Johnson at (509) 553-1841.



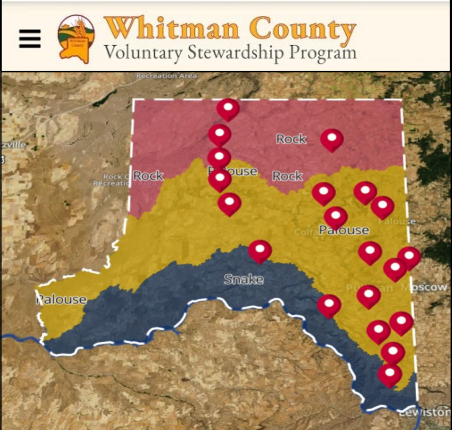
The Whitman County VSP Work Plan was adopted in 2017 by the VSP Work Group, which includes agriculture, environmental, and other stakeholders in Whitman County. The Work Group oversees the Work Plan implementation, which can be found at WhitmanCountyVSP.com.



Reporting is right at your fingertips!

Share your stewardship at
WhitmanCountyVSP.com

www.WhitmanCountyVSP.com



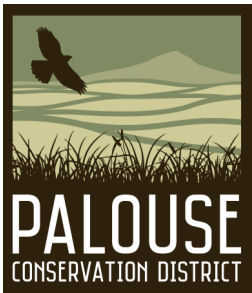
All information will remain confidential

Looking to add more
stewardship practices to your
property?

We can help! Contact your
local agency for assistance:

Palouse CD
Palouse Rock Lake CD
Pine Creek CD
Whitman CD
Cattlemen's Association

We are here to help meet
your stewardship goals.



Local solutions for your conservation goals.

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In response to COVID-19, the PCD office is closed to the public.

Our staff are working remotely and ready to help you. Visit PalouseCD.org for contact information or call (509) 332-4101.

Upcoming Events

- March 23 Wildfire 101: Mitigation & Planning | 6:00p**
WSU & WA DNR via Zoom, Register at forestry.wsu.edu
- 25 Native Plants in the Landscape | 6:00p**
Conservation Talk Series via Zoom, Register at www.PalouseCD.org
- April 2 & 3 PCD Tree Sale Pick-Up | 9:00a-4:00p & 10:00-1:00p**
Pre-Orders Only, Pick-Up at PCD Office
- 3 & 4 Pullman Stream Clean-Up | 11:00a-1:00p**
Socially distanced · 10 participants, givepulse.com/event/226680
- 7 Everyday Water Conservation | 6:00p**
Conservation Talk Series via Zoom, Register at www.PalouseCD.org
- 10 & 11 Pullman Stream Clean-Up | 11:00a-1:00p**
Socially distanced · 10 participants, givepulse.com/event/226680
- 13 Palouse CD Annual Meeting | 6:00-7:00p**
Zoom, Register at www.PalouseCD.org



"Bee on Camas"

Garrett LaCivita

WA State Conservation Commission

Finalist

Be a conservation hero! Sign-up for our newsletter at PalouseCD.org