



CHEERS TO THE NEW YEAR! START 2017 AS A RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP WITH THESE FIVE CONSERVATION TIPS

With the tick of a clock and the turn of a dial, 2016 swiftly makes its exit and is welcomed by the arrival of 2017. For a moment, on both an individual and global scale, all of us around the world pause to reflect, assess, and resolve in the New Year to remain hope-filled and committed to improving our lives moving forward.

In 2017, if you live on Whidbey Island, you have many reasons to celebrate. Our little corner of the world is a unique place, rich with natural beauty, underlain with historical legacy, and brim full with exceptional, diverse communities all intertwined by geography.

On your resolution list this year, consider conserving your natural resources. How might you go about doing this? Start by contacting the Whidbey Island Conservation District. As one of 45 conservation districts in Washington State, Whidbey Island Conservation District was created to help you conserve natural resources on your land through voluntary, incentive-based education and technical assistance. 2017 marks the conservation district's 50th anniversary. Since 1967, whether you're a farmer or forest owner, or a resident in town, Whidbey Island

Conservation District is here as a resource to you.

Conservation of natural resources starts on an individual level, right at home, and the following five tips can help get you started in 2017.

Tip #1 – Get to Know Your Soils

No matter what resource goals you have, knowing your soils is a key first step in understanding your land.

Visit Web Soil Survey: Curious about what lies beneath your feet? The USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey is a fantastic online tool that provides soil survey data. With just a few clicks, this interactive mapping tool will display your land's historical soil survey data. Why does this matter? Understanding your soil is the foundation for understanding and addressing a variety of natural resource goals and issues. Check out <https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/HomePage.htm> to try Web Soil Survey out.

Get a Soil Test: If you wish to take soil knowledge a step further, consider doing a soil test for an area of interest on your land. After selecting an area you'd like to have tested, gather at least 15-20 soil subsamples from that area at a depth of 6-8 inches (where plant roots grow). Mix these subsamples together to form a soil sample in a clean container, and contact Whidbey Island Conservation District to learn more

about where you can submit your samples for a soil test and recommendations.

Tip #2 – Build Soil through Composting to Promote Soil Health & Reduce Waste

Transform your daily "waste" into a valuable product. Compost food scraps and yard debris to save money, reduce waste, recycle nutrients, and turn your leftovers into a valuable soil amendment for your garden.

Compost Food Scraps with a Worm Bin: A worm bin is a great composting tool for food scraps from your kitchen. WSU Extension Island County's Waste Wise Program's website has great information on Worm Bin Basics and the value of food scrap

composting at <https://extension.wsu.edu/island/2014/02/composting/>.

Compost Yard Debris with Cold or Hot Composting: No fancy equipment is needed to compost your lawn clippings, twigs, or leaves! Several systems exist, including cold and hot composting. Cold composting is as simple as piling debris in a well-drained area on your land. Hot composting, however, is more effective at breaking down materials quickly and can kill weed seeds and disease-causing organisms. For more information on how to get started, check out USDA NRCS's Composting Tip Sheet www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=nrcs143_023542.

Tip #3 – Control Weeds

Noxious weeds are invasive, non-native plants that out-compete native plants and reduce land productivity. As a landowner, there are ways you can help control and remove noxious weeds and promote ecosystem balance on your land.

Get Up To Speed on Island County Noxious Weeds: Check out Island County Noxious Weed Control Board information at <http://extension.wsu.edu/island/nrs/noxious/>, including the most recent year's weed list.

Sign Up for Whidbey Island Conservation District's Weed Bulletin: Interested in receiving regular updates on local weeds of concern?

Check out WICD's Weed Bulletin webpage at www.whidbeycd.org/weed-bulletins.html to see past Weed Bulletins and to sign-up for future issues.

Tip #4 – Increase Habitat for Pollinators & Wildlife

Your backyard can be both beautiful and functional, promoting habitat for pollinators, beneficial insects, birds, and other wildlife. Through the use and arrangement of native trees, shrubs, and ground covers, food, water, shelter, and space requirements for wildlife can be met.

Habitat for Bees & Butterflies: Check out a wide array of resources for promoting pollinator habitat through the Xerces Society's at www.xerces.org.

Habitat for Birds: The Whidbey Audubon Society has additional information about birds on Whidbey Island, including a Birding Class that occurs from September – May. For more information, visit www.whidbeyaudubon.org/. Check out the National Audubon Society's Creating Bird-Friendly Communities Web page for information on how to promote bird habitat in your backyard at www.audubon.org/conservation/creating-bird-friendly-communities.

Habitat for Other Wildlife: Check out USDA NRCS's Wildlife Habitat Tip Sheet at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=nrcs143_023553.

Tip #5 – Conserve Your Water

Water quality and quantity are Whidbey Island's top natural resources.

For tips about how you can protect water resources, check out WICD's publication Living Responsibly in Your Community at www.whidbeycd.org/uploads/1/1/6/8/11683986/lrycweb510.pdf.

In 2017, as the New Year inspires you to pause, reflect, and plan for your future, with hope, consider the positive impact that applying a few conservation practices has on this unique place we all call home. Just like the health of your mind and body, the health of this landscape we share starts with you.



KICK OFF RELAY FOR LIFE 2017

7-8pm • January 11, 2017 • Oak Harbor Elks Lodge

Relay for Life of Whidbey Island • June 2-3, 2017 • RelayFor.Life/whidbey island



Thank you for reading! Please recycle the Whidbey Weekly when you are finished with it.

