



# Conservation CONNECTION

WHIDBEY ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

ISSUE

#7

dec  
2013

## Deadline for (EQIP) Environmental Quality Incentives Program set for Jan. 17, 2014

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) offers funding to help landowners implement conservation projects on their land through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is a voluntary program that provides financial assistance and technical expertise to landowners who want to plan and install measures to protect the soil, water, air and other natural resources on their land. Follow this [link](#) to learn more about how EQIP can help your farm or forest land, or call the local NRCS office in Mt. Vernon, 360-428-7758x131.

## Sound Waters

Saturday, February 1, 2014

Oak Harbor High School

Each year, the Island County Beach Watchers organize this "one day university for all," providing 60 classes about Puget Sound waters and all things related. This year's keynote speaker, William Steele, will be presenting: "Earthquake Early Warning: Time to Act". For more information, including a list of this year's classes, visit the [Sound Waters webpage](#).



Bare root plants are dug and transported while dormant, roots should be kept constantly cool and moist and planted ASAP.

## this issue

**Think Winter, Think Bare Root Natives!** P.1

Sound Waters P.1

Early Winter Livestock Farm Activities P.2

Whidbey Island Farm Tour 2014 P.2

Visit our website at  
[www.whidbeycd.org](http://www.whidbeycd.org)

## Think Winter, Think Bare Root Natives!

Native plants improve our water quality, reduce soil and wind erosion, clean the air, reduce energy costs, attract and support local wildlife, and beautify property. So it's no wonder WICD is passionate about native plants!

**But why spread the word about native plants now, as we head into winter? The answer in two words: bare root.**

"Bare root plants are the most affordable way to spread natives, and winter is bare root season," says Karen Bishop, WICD Manager. "You can safely transport bare roots in cool conditions and plant anytime the ground isn't frozen. We really want to encourage people to plant natives because using non-natives just sets the stage for perpetual maintenance," continues Bishop. "This leads to extra watering, the depletion of soil fertility, the potential for invasive weeds to take hold and spread, and the subsequent use of fertilizers and herbicides to manage these consequences."

Native plants are such a keystone to resource conservation that the Washington State Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) has developed its own plant material center for growing and distributing

native species. Each year, bare root plants from the center are harvested during the dormant season and sold through participating Conservation Districts. WICD is in the middle of a pre-sale process in which orders are taken and paid for online at our website through January, then packed for pick up on February 28 or March 1, 2014. "We currently have a great variety of 37 different Western Washington species we're selling in bundles of five plants for \$5 - \$10 per bundle. Bare roots are so wonderfully inexpensive," says WICD Plant Sale Manager, Sandy Welch.

Conservation of soil and water may be a guiding principle behind selling native plants to the Whidbey Island community, but raising public awareness of responsible land and resource stewardship is the real mission of WICD. "Selling native plants is not a money-making project for us," adds District Manager Bishop. "If we make any money at all, it goes right back in to educational programs on resource conservation. It's all about spreading the word."

**To view the list of available plants and order online, go to [www.whidbeycd.org](http://www.whidbeycd.org), or call the WICD office at 678-4708.**

*Happy Holidays!*  
from the WICD staff



Our office will be closed December 24, 25 & January 1.



## Farmers Wanted!

### Whidbey Island Farm Tour September 20 & 21, 2014

The Farm Tour highlights a diversity of farms across the island, providing an opportunity for farms to promote their locally grown food, fiber, and other products to visitors from both on and off-island. We are always looking for new farms to add to the mix, including host farms, to which visitors can come, and guest farms, which can participate on a host farm. If your farm has been on the tour before, watch for your invitation to arrive in the mail by early January. If you haven't participated before and would like to know more, visit the [Farm Tour website](#) or call Sarah at 360-678-4708. Deadline for applications is January 31.

## Join our Fabulous Farm Tour Committee

Thanks to the 2013 Farm Tour Committee, over 1,500 visitors enjoyed touring 14 farms across Whidbey Island this year. The Committee assists WICD in organizing this annual, island-wide event, including soliciting sponsorships, supporting farmers with their preparations, developing a marketing and advertising plan, and coordinating with partners. If you have skills in any of these areas and are interested in supporting the farming community of Whidbey Island, we'd love to speak with you about joining our team. We meet once a month through the year and each member contributes wherever their skills and interests best support the tour.

## Early Winter Livestock Farm Checklist

The rainy season is about to get underway. Now is the time to complete any last-minute preparations for winter. These tasks might include cleaning gutters and downspouts to ensure stormwater will be directed away from livestock areas and pathways. Add geotextile fabric and footing material as needed in sac-

rifice areas to prevent mud. Keep a close eye on pastures and restrict animals from pastures when grass growth has stopped or soils are saturated to keep pastures healthy and prevent contamination of surface and ground water. If you have questions about winter management tips, contact us for assistance.

### Here are several tips to keep pastures productive, livestock healthy, and water clean:

- Clean gutters and downspouts to make sure stormwater is directed away from livestock areas.
- Install footing material over geotextile fabric to a minimum of 6 inches deep to prevent mud.
- Collect manure (from horses and other livestock that have concentrated manure areas) at least twice weekly to prevent water contamination and buildup of muck.
- Cover and store manure 100 feet away from wells and surface waters. Make sure manure does not become saturated (may need extra tarps to prevent seepage).
- Remove animals from production pastures for the winter to prevent over-grazing and allow plants to rest for improved growth next spring.
- Restrict livestock from winter pastures when soil is saturated to prevent soil compaction and root damage.
- When temperatures drop below freezing, keep water troughs clear of ice.
- Use fallen branches from winter storms to create brush piles for wildlife.

## Country Living Expo

Saturday, January 25, 2014, Stanwood High School

There is always something new at the annual Country Living Expo and Cattlemens' Winter School. This year, there are over 170 classes to choose from, covering a wide variety of topics related to living in the country. Look for 60 new classes this year, including two Friday

evening classes and a beef farm tour that will take place on Sunday. You'll be able to network with other small farmers and visit with local agricultural businesses offering you services and products on the Trade Show floor. Stop by to visit us at our booth in the Trade Show or join us for our class, "What a Farm Plan Can Do for You" in Session 6. Be sure to check it all out at the [website](#).

## Workshop on the Value-Added Producer Grant Program

**When:** Wednesday, January 8, 2014; 10:00am – 1:00pm

**Where:** Skagit Farmers Supply, Burlington Main Office, 1833 Park Lane, Burlington, WA 98233. Park and enter on south side of building.

The USDA is offering this FREE workshop to provide an overview of the Value-Added Producer Grant program. Value-Added Producer Grants are available to help agricultural producers create new products, expand marketing oppor-

tunities, support further processing of existing products or goods, to develop specialty and niche products, or for farm-based renewable energy projects. They may be used for working capital and planning activities. The maximum working capital grant is \$200,000; the maximum planning grant is \$75,000. Funding priority is given to socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers or ranchers, and to small- to medium-size family farms. Discussions

will include eligibility, application process, application scoring, and in-depth application assistance for those intending to apply. For more info about the Value-Added Producer Grant Program, please go to this link or view the Farmers Guide to Value-Added Producer Grant Funding ([PDF](#))

RSVP to Melanie Drecksel, Senior Loan Specialist at [melanie.drecksel@wa.usda.gov](mailto:melanie.drecksel@wa.usda.gov) or call (360) 428-4322, Ext. 15.