



Conservation CONNECTION

WHIDBEY ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

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2015 EQIP Signup Cutoff Set For November 21, 2014

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program is a voluntary, technical and financial assistance program designed to help farmers improve irrigation efficiency; manage nutrient run-off and/or animal waste; improve the health of native plant communities; and reduce soil loss. In most instances, producers who participate in the program pay for roughly half of the costs of the conservation measures or practices.

If you're interested in applying for 2015 funding, contact our local NRCS representative at (360) 428-7684 ext 3, request an application, and make sure to submit it by the November 21 deadline.



Pacific Ninebark (Physocarpus capitatus), growing 10'-15' tall, thrives in wet to moist conditions in partial shade.

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Visit our website at
www.whidbeycd.org

2015 WICD Annual Native Bareroot Plant Pre-Sale Begins! **New species . . . and easy online ordering!**

This year we have 31 species of natives, including 3 species new to our sale: Western White Pine, Black Cap Raspberry, and Snowbrush Ceanothus. Our **Plant Sale Storefront** has expanded descriptions and pictures of all the plants offered. It's time to shop!

Native plants improve water quality, reduce soil and wind erosion, clean the air, reduce energy costs, help protect homes from wildfire, attract and support local wildlife, and beautify property.

In addition, plant sale revenues contribute to our programs – including free farm and forest planning and best practice assistance, engineering services, storm water management, cost share and tax incen-

tive program guidance, and educational workshops on a variety of local resource conservation topics.

How do I order my bareroot plants?

Ordering your plants and purchasing by credit card is easy at our website: www.whidbeycd.org.

Phone orders can be taken by calling 360-678-4708, or by walk-in at our office, 1 NE 4th St., Coupeville. Order now for pick up late February at two different locations:

- **Friday, February 27:** 2:00pm - 6:00pm at our WICD office, 1 NE 4th St., Coupeville
- **Saturday, February 28:** 9:30am - 1:00pm at Greenbank Farm, Greenbank (in the big barn).

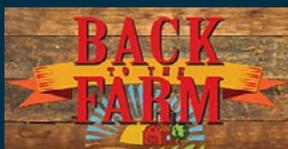
Farm Business Resources

- If you are planning a new farm venture and you need assistance with how to lay out your farm to best balance the property's natural features with your goals, call the Conservation District, 360-678-4708, or visit the [WICD website!](http://www.whidbeycd.org) WICD staff will visit your site free of charge and

provide you with a wide range of resources.

- For assistance with agricultural product marketing and business development, or to join the Northwest Agriculture Business Center network, visit the [NABC website](http://www.nabc.org). Additionally, you can join the [Farmer Network](http://www.farmer-network.com).
- [USDA](http://www.usda.gov) has resources for new & existing farms.

- Need help with business planning, financing and information on general business assistance for Island County? Visit the [Is. Co. Economic Development Council](http://www.isco.org) website.
- Looking for capital to launch or expand your Whidbey Island business? Take a look at this [news clip](#) that recently ran on King 5 news!



Back to the Farm - 11th Annual Focus on Farming Conference Thursday, Nov. 20 - Evergreen Fairgrounds, Monroe. The conference will feature keynote speakers, industry trade show, networking opportunities and 24 great workshop classes in six industry tracks. View [more details](#) and [register](#) today.

Upcoming Events - Please visit our website [Calendar page](#) for more details on other events.

Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Course offered on-line this Winter

WSU Extension will be offering the Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Course in an on-line format this winter. The class runs from February 19 until April 2, 2015, with a class each Thursday evening from 6:00 until 9:00. There is a field trip on Saturday, March 21st. As part of this course, you will learn:

- How to assess the health of your trees
- How to determine whether your forest would benefit from thinning
- How to identify hazard trees
- How to identify and control noxious weeds in your forest
- How to earn income from mushrooms, berries, or holiday greens
- How to learn more about your soils, and how they affect tree growth
- And much more!

You will prepare your own management plan for your forest, and learn about how to qualify for property tax reductions or conservation cost-share grants.

This course will be offered via live, interactive webinars. Important: **You must have a high-speed internet connection to participate** (e.g. DSL, cable). The webinars will not work over dial-up (and may not work with slower satellite connections).

The cost is \$170 before February 2nd, and \$200 February 2nd or later. More info available [here](#).

WICD looks forward to sponsoring another Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Course here on Whidbey in Fall of 2015!

Winter Preparations for Livestock Farms

As fall blusters and showers its way into winter, now is a good time to complete preparations and begin the transition into the rainy season.

Pasture Production for next year is determined by what we do now:

- Leave pasture grasses 3 inches or more in height and allow to rest for the winter.
- Keep livestock off grazing pastures when soils are wet to prevent compaction and root damage.

Minimize Mud by managing storm-water and protecting soils:

- Clear gutters and downspouts.
- Route runoff away from livestock confinement areas. Direct clean roof runoff to storm ditches or rain gardens. Surface runoff should be routed through vegetated areas or rain gardens for filtration.
- Install at least 6 inches of footing

material over geotextile fabric to prevent mud in confinement or other high traffic areas.

Manage Manure to protect livestock health and water quality:

- Collect manure at least twice weekly from confinement areas, ideally daily when raining.
- Store manure under cover using waterproof tarps or roofed structure.
- Store manure on an impervious surface or high ground to prevent leaching into groundwater.
- Do not put manure out on fields until grass growth is underway next spring.

Cold Weather Measures to keep



livestock healthy:

- Check trough water heaters to make sure they are working and have them ready for freezing weather. Alternatively, keep ice-breaking tools handy.
- Provide protection from wind and rain during cold weather to help livestock maintain weight and reduce feed costs.

Contact us for more information on these and other winter-ready measures for the livestock farm.

Ebey's Prairie Watershed Remediation Grant Update

Whidbey Island Conservation District has been working under a grant from the state Department of Ecology to study the water quality of surface waters in the Ebey's Prairie watershed beginning in March of 2013, continuing through February of 2015. As part



of this grant, we have been collecting water quality samples, studying the hydrology of the watershed, and attempting to identify and address potential pollution sources.

The Ebey's Prairie watershed is approximately 2,200 acres in size, and consists primarily of agricultural lands (1,653 acres, or approximately 75%). 237 acres lie within the Town of Coupeville (11%), and approximately 314 acres are in forest and/or low-density residential (14%).

Water quality data at the outfall at Ebey's Landing has documented serious water quality issues dating back to 1997, and it has exceeded state standards for Fecal Coliform every year since regular sampling began in 2007.

Under this grant, we have been gathering water quality data at eight

points within the watershed. We hope that this will help to identify pollutant sources within the watershed, and will guide our efforts to implement strategies to reduce the amount of pollutants that reach Puget Sound. These strategies include working with farmers on field practices, working with property owners to reduce stormwater flows from their property, and educating residents about what they can do to minimize their impacts to water quality.

Early results from the 2013-2014 sampling season were encouraging, but some of the data from later in the Spring of 2014 showed high levels of fecal coliform bacteria in some areas of the watershed. We will be doing some follow-up sampling to try to identify contaminant sources.