



Conservation CONNECTION

WHIDBEY ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

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Applications for NRCS Cost-Share EQIP Programs Due December 21st!

The WICD hosted a workshop this fall at which Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) planner Jared Hamman discussed conservation programs and various types of activities for which farm and forest owners can qualify for cost-share assistance from the NRCS. Applications for the next round of funding under the EQIP program are due to NRCS by December 21, 2013.

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WICD Board of Supervisors Election Soon!

Each year, the Whidbey Island Conservation District holds an election for its Board of Supervisors. The board consists of five members, three elected and two appointed, each serving a three-year term without compensation. Supervisors set district priorities and oversee financial operations and District programs to protect soil, water, wildlife, and other natural resources.

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WICD Supervisors: l.- r. Sarah Richards, Tim Keohane, Wendi Hilborn, Fran Einterz, Tom Fournier

Welcome!

The Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD) is excited to launch our first electronic newsletter, providing you with district news and information on projects and upcoming workshops. The mission of WICD is to serve the residents of Whidbey Island by providing voluntary, incentive-based options for conserving natural resources through educational outreach as well as technical and financial assistance to provide a healthy environment for present and future generations. We serve all types of residents, urban and rural. The Conservation District has no regulatory authority.

2013 Native Plant Sale Begins!

We are currently taking pre-orders on a beautiful selection of native plants and trees. Order now for pick up the first weekend in March, 2013.

The purpose of the WICD's annual spring plant sale is to promote good stewardship and responsible conservation of our natural resources. Benefits to your property and the natural environment by planting native trees and shrubs include improved water quality, enhanced fish and wildlife habitat, reduction of wind and soil erosion, cleaner air, reduction of energy costs, and beautification

Landowners have worked with us on a confidential, voluntary basis to solve their resource issues since 1967. The Conservation District is unique in that we serve local residents but we are not part of Island County government. We are a subdivision of state government – governed by a locally elected and appointed Board of Supervisors who serve on a voluntary basis.

Moving into the future, we look forward to sharing more consistent information with you via our newsletter. Enjoy and, of course, your feedback is appreciated.

— Karen Bishop, WICD District Manager

of your property! Most of the plants are sold as bareroot, a few varieties are in pots. This sale is a great opportunity to purchase low cost native plants and to get them in the ground before the growing season begins.

New This Year! Orders will be taken *online* at: www.whidbeycd.org until January 30, 2013. We offer two pickup locations on two days: **March 1, 2013:** 1:00pm - 6:00pm at our WICD office, 1 NE 4th St., Coupeville; and **March 2, 2013:** 9:30am - 1:30pm at the Island Co Fairgrounds, 819 Camano Ave., Langley. *Quantities are limited so order early!*

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Visit our website at
www.whidbeycd.org

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NRCS Cost-Share EQIP Programs

Washington NRCS programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters. Public benefits include enhanced natural resources that help sustain agricultural productivity and environmental quality while supporting continued economic development, recreation, and scenic beauty. Owners of land in agricultural or forest production or persons who are engaged in livestock, agricultural, or forest production on eligible land and have a natural resource concern on the land may participate in EQIP. EQIP is a voluntary conservation program designed to help implement selected conservation practices. NRCS evaluates and ranks applications for funding consistent with identified local, state, and national priorities.

Examples of practices that may qualify for funding include fencing livestock from critical areas, constructing manure bins, transitioning to organic farming practices, and construction of seasonal high tunnels.

For more information, contact the WICD (360-678-4708), NRCS Mount Vernon Service Center (360-428-7684), or visit the state website at <http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/programs>

Farm Planning Workshop Recap

Small farm livestock owners benefit from an overview of the farm planning process

The WICD held a workshop on farm planning for small farm livestock owners this fall in Oak Harbor. Sarah Cassatt and Rob Hallbauer of the WICD, and David Ridle of Skagit Farmers Supply, presented to seventeen participants, who actively engaged in discussing a variety of topics common to many farms on Whidbey Island.

The workshop provided an overview of the farm planning process and how a farm plan can be an effective management tool used to inform decisions about layout and operations of the farm, taking into consideration site constraints and available resources.

The planning process begins with determining the farmer's goals and then identifies problems that may be preventing the farmer from reaching

those goals. Goals can include productive pastures and hayfields, healthy livestock, efficiency of chores, natural resource protection, aesthetics, producing farm income, and providing a working farm for future generations, among others. Common problems include mud, overgrazed pastures, potential water quality impacts, and maintenance issues.

The workshop included presentations on several topics typically addressed in a farm plan, identification of potential goals and issues for local farms, and discussion of possible solutions. Using issues from participant's farms as examples, a sample farm map was created to demonstrate how a farm plan could integrate solutions to multiple issues to achieve the

farmer's goals. Participants were provided handout materials with additional information.

Follow up assistance is available, including on-site consultations and development of a farm plan. For those interested, a second workshop will be held later this winter and will likely be located in Freeland. Please contact Sarah Cassatt at WICD to be on the notification list for the second workshop.



December Livestock Farm Management Tips

- Collect manure at least twice a week from paddocks to prevent nutrient leaching or runoff
- Keep manure covered and at least 100 feet from wells and surface waters.
- Keep livestock off pastures when soil is saturated
- Keep water troughs/tanks from freezing or clear ice at least daily
- Provide birds and other wildlife safe access to water during freezing weather

For more information on Farm Management . . . [click here!](#)



New Bioswale for Meerkerk Gardens

WICD recently participated in the design and installation of a bioswale at the Meerkerk Gardens in Greenbank. This was Phase 2 of an effort by the Meerkerk staff to manage high rates of stormwater flows that occur each winter. Phase 1, completed in 2010, conveys these flows through a series of swales and pools, until it enters two four inch pipes. These pipes convey the water to a pond on the property, which is used for irrigation in the summer. The pipe system was installed as an emergency repair, and was not adequate to handle the flows resulting from our heaviest storms. Phase 2 included replacing almost 300 feet of the pipe system with another series of open swales and pools, as well as a section of 10-inch pipe, where the flow passes under the access road. WICD performed the field elevation work and provided design guidance and detailed design drawings. Designed to act more like a natural drainage system, the open swales and small ponds will serve to remove sediment from the stormwater flows via

filtration through the soil and deposition in the pools. In addition, the total volume of stormwater will be reduced, due to uptake by plants and absorption into the soil. This will not only nourish the soil and plants at the gardens, but also recharge the groundwater aquifer that supplies drinking water for the area's residents. The water that passes through the system to the pond will be used to irrigate Meerkerk's extensive gardens in the dry summer months, thus reducing demand on the aquifer.

Barton Cole, Special Projects Gardener at Meerkerk, was instrumental in the design and installation of the new bioswale system. The pathway for the bioswale was carefully chosen



*Barton Cole,
Meerkerk Special Projects Gardener*

to work with the slopes of the site, and, wherever possible, to avoid the most irreplaceable of the tree and shrub specimens in this unique garden. Dozens of plants were moved to make way for the bioswale, many to later be used to replant the berm around the edges of the ponds and the swale.

The water that passes through the system to the pond will be used to irrigate Meerkerk's extensive gardens in the dry summer months

This project provides an excellent example of how we can modify our landscapes to allow our drainage systems to behave more like natural systems, where stormwater is absorbed and filtered by soil and plants. Special thanks go out to WSU Extension of Island County for their generous support, as well as the dedicated staff and volunteers at Meerkerk Gardens, who worked tirelessly to make this project a success!

Rain and Runoff

It's the rainy season, and time to start thinking about how best to manage stormwater flows from our rooftops, driveways, and other impervious surfaces. Polluted stormwater runoff can have many adverse effects on plants, fish, animals, and people.

What can we do to reduce the adverse impacts of stormwater?

Around the House

- Divert stormwater away from driveways and roads. Instead, consider installing a rain garden.
- Recycle or properly dispose of household products that contain chemicals. Don't pour them onto the ground or into storm drains.

Lawn care

- Don't overwater your lawn.
- Use pesticides & fertilizers sparingly.
- Compost or mulch yard waste.

Auto care

- Use a commercial car wash that treats or recycles its wastewater, or wash your car on your yard so the water infiltrates into the ground.
- Repair leaks and dispose of used auto fluids & batteries at designated drop-off or recycling locations.

On the Farm

- Rotate animal grazing to prevent soil erosion in fields.
- Keep livestock away from streambanks and provide them a water source away from waterbodies.
- Store and apply manure away from waterbodies.
- Vegetate riparian areas along waterways.
- Use pesticides & fertilizers sparingly.

Septic systems

- Inspect your system every 3 years and pump your tank as necessary (every 3 to 5 years).
- Don't dispose of household hazardous waste in sinks or toilets.

For more detail and information on Stormwater effects and management [click here!](#)



Board Spotlight Sarah Richards

The Whidbey Island Conservation District welcomes their newest supervisor, Sarah Richards. Sarah joined the board to fill the position vacated by Antonia Palkovic, who has moved out of state to begin a new venture. We wish her well.

Sarah Richards, owner and operator of Lavender Wind Farm, has been growing lavender on Whidbey Island for several years. She has had a myriad of work experiences including telephone installation, computer programming, and mental health counseling. She has a Master's degree in Counseling from Oregon State University. Recently, she has served on the boards of Northwest Agriculture Business Center, KWPA Radio, is a founding officer of the United States Lavender Growers Association, and was President of Central Whidbey Chamber of Commerce for two terms.

Most recently, she has opened her new gift shop and manufacturing/kitchen facility in downtown Coupeville where she and others can process value-added products. All of which is to say, Sarah is a talented and avid supporter of agricultural enterprises here on rural Whidbey.

Upcoming Events

Farmer's Intern Informational Meeting	Jan 9	4:00 - 5:30pm
Current Use Tax Programs Workshop	Jan 29	5:00 - 7:00pm
Current Use Tax Programs Workshop	Feb 5	5:00 - 7:00pm

Please watch the [Calendar page](#) on our website for more details.

Got Manure?

If you have more manure than you can use, or you need more than you have, join our manure exchange list. This list will be posted on our website.

For more information, call Sarah at 360-678-4708 or email sarah@whidbeycd.org



Whidbey Island Conservation District Honored

The Conservation District Board and its staff received high honors at a recent gathering of the ten Northwest Washington Area Conservation Districts who met at the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Center in Sequim. WICD received the 2012 Northwest Area District of the Year award. The District's "increased stature and effectiveness in the community" as well as the way the district "continues to get an incredible amount of work done on the ground" were cited as some of the reasons WICD was honored with this award. Karen Bishop received the 2012 Northwest Area District Manager of the Year award for bringing together an outstanding team that is technically sound and extremely productive. She was also acknowledged as being an effective ambassador and advocate for the conservation delivery system in our area. Farm and Forest Resource



from l-r.: WICD supervisor Tom Fournier; WICD supervisor Fran Einterz; WSCC Executive Director Mark Clark, WICD Manager Karen Bishop, WICD Planner Ken Drecksel, WSCC Regional Manager Stu Trefry

Planner, Ken Drecksel received the Northwest Region Employee of the year award. He was recognized for his dedication to providing technical training to staff and his hard work with forest and farm landowners to get conservation on the ground.

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WICD Supervisor Election Soon!

One elected position, currently held by Tim Keohane, expires May 2013. Tim joined the Board in 2012 and owns and manages a small farm and forest land on central Whidbey. Tim plans to run for re-election.

The 2013 election is scheduled for February 5, 2:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Supervisor positions are open to registered voters residing on Whidbey Island; candidates may be required to own land or operate a farm. The filing deadline for interested candidates is January 8, 2013 at 4:30 pm.

For candidate filing information or for other related information, contact Sandy at 360-678-4708 or [click here!](#) to visit our Supervisors webpage.