



Conservation CONNECTION

WHIDBEY ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

ISSUE

#31

summer
2020

Changes to the WICD Board

In May, WICD said goodbye to three board members. Tom Fournier was appointed in 2011 and served as Board Treasurer and Auditor, Ed Adams was appointed in 2015 and served as Board President since 2017, and Anza Muenchow was elected in 2017 and served as Board Auditor. Thank you Tom, Ed, and Anza for your dedicated service!



(l-r) Tom Fournier, Ed Adams, Anza Muenchow

This spring, one appointed and one elected supervisor joined the board, with one appointed position still to be filled by the Washington State Conservation Commission.

In our last newsletter we introduced Gary Ketcheson as our newly elected supervisor, and now we're excited to welcome Mark Sytsma. Mark retired from a 24-year career as a professor



Mark Sytsma joins the WICD Board

of Environmental Science and Management at Portland State University. He now lives on 15 acres on South Whidbey that he intends to manage for wildlife habitat and grazing.

For outgoing supervisor messages, current profiles, and information about our board, visit www.whidbeycd.org/board.



Whidbey Islanders, like those at the Bayview Farmers Market pictured above, are turning to local farms for fresh food during the pandemic, and WICD is helping to support the local food system.



Weeds of Summer 2020:

Our seasonally-themed weed bulletins are a partnership between WICD and Island County's Department of Natural Resources. They highlight the most important noxious weeds for landowners to look out for that season. To view the current bulletin click [HERE](#), or to view an archive of local weed resources, visit www.whidbeycd.org/weed-bulletin. View the complete list of Island County's Noxious Weeds for 2020 at <https://bit.ly/2UH1u4q>.

Supporting Local Agriculture

At WICD, we consider local agriculture to be an important natural resource for our community. Due to the COVID19 pandemic and quarantine, support and demand for local farm products has increased, and we want to help encourage the connections that are building between local farmers/producers and the public.

Through our Whidbey Island Growers Association monthly meetings, we partner with WSU Extension Farm & Food Systems to provide networking and education opportunities to the local agricultural community. www.whidbeycd.org/agricultural-community

Through our social media, we promote local farmers markets, seasonal eating, and other concepts to the public to encourage support for local farmers and producers.

Through our website, we have compiled a list of COVID19 resources and funding sources to help support farmers and producers who have been financially impacted by the quarantine.

www.whidbeycd.org/farm-ag-assistance

Through our staff, we are contributing administrative support to the newly incorporated Whidbey Island Grown Cooperative, which is aggregating locally produced products in an online marketplace and making them available at farm stands for socially distant pick-up. www.whidbeyislandgrown.com



Returning to Work

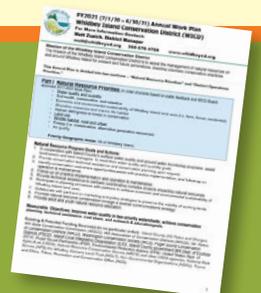
As Island County phases in to working life, WICD is following all guidance and protocols from Governor Inslee, Island County, and the Washington State Conservation Commission. Our office will remain closed to public walk-ins and our staff will continue to work remotely when possible.

A staff person is in the office during business hours to answer phone calls, and our natural resource planners are scheduling site visits and working in the field again, following social distancing protocols as prescribed. If you'd like to schedule a site visit on your farm or property, or call us with a question, please do! We are here to help and looking forward to safely visiting with community members again.

Our natural resource planners provide farm, forest, water management, and native habitat technical assistance at no cost. Start the assistance process by clicking [HERE](#). Or call us with questions at 888-678-4922.

WICD Approves Work Plan for the Coming Year

Each spring, the WICD board of supervisors and staff seek feedback from partners and the public to develop an Annual Plan of Work, serving as guidance to staff in carrying out natural resource priorities. At the May 27 WICD board meeting, supervisors approved the FY21 Work Plan covering July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021. To view the plan or learn more, click the image at right or visit www.whidbeycd.org/work-plans.html.



Thank you, Erin!



Our wonderful, passionate, knowledgeable farm planner Dr. Erin Borden resigned her position in May to spend more time with her family and critters. We thank her for the energy and expertise she brought to WICD and wish her the best of luck in her future pursuits.

Erin focused much of her time serving the horse and livestock community. WICD staff Kelsi Mottet and Gwendolyn Hannam have expanded their skills and are ready to step in. If you need livestock or farm assistance, schedule a visit [HERE](#).



Lone Lake Algae Management Plan

In July 2018, WICD received grant funding from the WA Department of Ecology's Freshwater Algae Program to develop an Algae Management Plan for Lone Lake focused on reducing nutrient loading, restoring native vegetation and fish habitat, improving water quality, and enhancing recreational use of Lone Lake. Our multi-year grant work on the plan came to a close this June. WICD held a public meeting on Tuesday, June 23 to present the findings of the project and to engage the users and residents of the lake to provide input and ask questions. To view a recording of the virtual public meeting along with downloadable copies of the presentation files and a draft of the Lone Lake Management Plan, visit www.whidbeycd.org/lone-lake-algae-management.

Whidbey Residents Rally Around Wildfire Preparedness

With summer now in full swing and wildfire season upon us, many Whidbey landowners and communities are taking proactive action to help reduce their wildfire risk through the guidance and resources provided by the **Whidbey Island Firewise Program** (WIFP). The WIFP is a partnership between WICD and emergency response personnel at the WA

Department of Natural Resources Wildfire Division (DNR), local fire districts, and additional resource agency partners like Washington State Parks (WSP). Most recently, two communities – June Beach Property Owners Association located in the South Whidbey Fire & Rescue District, and Pondilla Estates

community in the North Whidbey Fire & Rescue District – worked collaboratively with staff and volunteers from the DNR, their local fire district, and WICD to hold safely social-distanced work parties. Work parties consisted of invasive species removal, vegetation trimming to create “fuel breaks,” and pruning of low-hanging “ladder fuel” tree limbs – vegetation that poses an increase in wildfire hazard due to its arrangement and ability to encourage wildfire embers to travel or “ladder up” into a tree canopy. Prior to these work parties, leaders in each community worked alongside WICD, DNR, and their local fire district to identify areas of

higher wildfire hazard to target for the best impact. Both communities are working toward becoming a nationally recognized **Firewise USA® site**. Several benefits to the Whidbey Island Firewise Program are that staff from each partnering agency work together with residents to provide fire expertise and guidance unique to each community's goals and situations,

and help residents create action plans, do outreach, and conduct fuel reduction days. Whidbey Island is slowly and steadily growing

the number of its nationally recognized Firewise USA® communities. In 2018, Sierra Country Club was recognized

as the island's first. It's a collaborative process that takes time when you do it right, and involves multiple stakeholders and multiple steps, all of which are voluntary and driven by the communities themselves. As of November 2019, we at WICD are proud to announce the Whidbey Island Campers Haven (WICH) in the Central Whidbey Island Fire & Rescue District (CWIFR) is our island's second nationally recognized Firewise USA® site. Congratulations! Driven by WICH member and Firewise Lead, Joy Page, with support from the board and members, WICH has been thoughtfully and thoroughly assessing and addressing its unique wildfire hazards through outreach and education on fire safety and campsite maintenance since September 2018.



(top) WICD's Kelsi Mottet presents WICH's Board Chair, Ted Case, with his community's Firewise USA® plaque and metal signs, which will be displayed proudly within the community. (above left) Pondilla Estates residents pruned, limbed, and chipped vegetation on two work sites in their community alongside firefighters and staff from DNR, NWFR, WICD, and WSP.

A June Beach property owner trims back vegetation to create defensible space.

Virtual Events Keep on Giving!

Due to the global COVID19 pandemic, WICD wasn't able to celebrate in person many spring events, including Earth Day, Stewardship Week, Community Wildfire Preparedness Day, and Endangered Species Awareness Day. So what did we do? We celebrated online! We focused our website and social media on the event subjects, so the community could participate and celebrate safely from home, and added ongoing information - check out the links below.

● **Earth Day & Stewardship Week** - on our webpage www.whidbeycd.org/earthday you'll find suggested stewardship activities and educational resources that celebrate the earth, as well as hear from many organizations on the island about the importance of stewardship.

● **Washington Wildfire Awareness Month** - usually we kick-off May with community work parties to prepare neighborhoods for wildfire season. Those work parties were slightly postponed (see Firewise article above), and others may be happening this summer, so stay tuned for information about how to get involved! Visit our webpage www.whidbeycd.org/firewise for up to date information about reducing wildfire risk on your property and participating in community events.

● **Supporting Endangered Species** - May 15 was **National Endangered Species Day**, June is **Orca Month**, and June 22-28 is **National Pollinator Week**. All these events bring awareness to the struggles faced by many of our planet's species and how we can help. Follow us on social media for posts on these issues, and visit our webpage www.whidbeycd.org/orca for resources specific to helping the Southern Resident Orcas during Orca Month and beyond.

