

THE CASCADIA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# CONSERVATION QUARTERLY

SPRING 2008



## GIVE YOUR PROPERTY A FIGHTING CHANCE

**F**ire is a fact of life in North Central Washington. Ultimately, it is not a matter of if a wildfire will occur, but when. As residents of a fire-prone area it is important that we recognize the dangers that exist around us and do what we can to protect our families, our firefighters and our property **BEFORE** a wildfire starts.

If a fire were to start today, how would your property fare? Would firefighters be able to drive up your driveway and turn around? Would your roofing materials resist ignition from flying embers? Would the vegetation in your landscape carry flames to your home? Would you have a place to take your pets and livestock? Most importantly, would you and your family be prepared?



Fires are a part of life in our neck of the woods, but they don't have to be a catastrophe. There are a number of simple things we can do as landowners to reduce the vulnerability of our home and landscape to wildfire.

The Cascadia Conservation District and members of the Volunteer FireWise Assessment Corps are pleased to offer **FREE** wildfire risk assessments. Learn what you can do to prepare for a wildfire and make it simpler and safer for firefighters to access and defend your home. Call (509) 664-0275 or visit [www.cascadiacd.org](http://www.cascadiacd.org) to schedule your **FREE** FireWise assessment today.

## HISTORY OF THE CASCADIA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

**I**n this issue of the Conservation Quarterly, we continue to celebrate our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary by bringing you the second installment in the conservation district history series. In the last issue, we described what conservation districts are and how they came to be following the "dust bowl" disaster of the 1930's. In this issue we will review the life of our district from inception to today.

During the 1939 legislative session, Washington State lawmakers passed the conservation districts law, or RCW 89.08, in an effort to protect natural resources in the state. As the preamble states they recognized, "*That the lands of the state of Washington are among the basic assets of the state*"

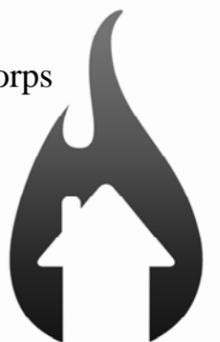
*(Continued on page 4)*

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The Cascadia Conservation District & Volunteer FireWise Assessment Corps are pleased to offer...

# FREE FIREWISE ASSESSMENTS



Learn what you can do to reduce the vulnerability of your home and landscape to wildfire.

Go to [www.cascadiacd.org](http://www.cascadiacd.org) or call **(509) 664-0275** to schedule your **FREE** FireWise assessment today!



## WHAT LAWMAKERS ARE DOING ABOUT PHOSPHORUS\*

### In 1994

Washington State made it illegal to sell laundry detergents containing more than 0.5% phosphorus by weight and dishwashing detergents containing more than 8.7% phosphorus by weight.

### Beginning July 1, 2008

In Spokane and Whatcom Counties it will be illegal to sell dishwashing detergent containing 0.5% phosphorus or more by weight.

Single-use packets, such as tablets or gel packs of detergent, may contain a maximum of 2.0 grams of phosphorus per packet.

### In July 2010:

The amount of phosphorus allowed statewide will be no more than 0.5%.

\* The sale or distribution of detergents for commercial or industrial uses are exempt.

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT PHOSPHORUS?



One of the most common causes of water pollution in Washington State is phosphorus. At least 260 bodies of water in the state have problematic phosphorus levels, including the Wenatchee River and some of its tributaries.

### Why Phosphorus Is a Problem

In the water, phosphorus behaves as a fertilizer and accelerates aquatic plant and algae growth. Kept in check, these organisms play an important role in sustaining a healthy river ecosystem. An overabundance of aquatic plants and algae, however, can be harmful.

Too many plants and algae in a river or stream reduces water clarity, clogs irrigation pumps and makes wading hazardous. More importantly, as these plants and algae die and decay they increase pH levels and the demand for dissolved oxygen. When this happens, less oxygen is available for fish and other aquatic life that need it to survive.

### Where Phosphorus Comes From

Phosphorus occurs naturally in the soil and in human and animal wastes. It is a common ingredient in household detergents and fertilizers, and it is used in many industrial processes. According to the Washington State Department of Ecology, "point" or discrete sources such as industry and wastewater

treatment plants account for nearly half of the phosphorus contributed to the Wenatchee River watershed. The other half comes from a variety of "nonpoint", or diffuse, sources which are hard to trace and individually identify such as septic tanks, and urban, suburban and agricultural runoff.

### What You Can Do About It

Whether from "point" or "nonpoint" sources, a large percentage of the phosphorus making its way into the Wenatchee River watershed is ultimately a result of the products we choose to use and how we choose to use them.

Seemingly small everyday choices that we make as consumers can make a big difference. By eliminating or reducing our use of phosphorus-containing detergents and fertilizers we can reduce the amount of phosphorus entering our rivers and streams. Here are some tips to help you get started...

- Check product labels for phosphorus content. Phosphorus is often listed as "phosphates". Try to use only products that contain low or no phosphates.
- Alternatives to phosphorus, such as enzymes, have been shown to be just as effective at food removal and spot reduction. A 2005 study by Consumer Reports shows that phosphorus-free dishwashing detergents do a "good to excellent job cleaning".
- Use composted kitchen and yard waste to build rich soils in your garden instead of store-bought fertilizers.
- Consider landscaping with native plants. They often require less water and fertilizer because they are well adapted to the local climate and soil conditions.
- Have your septic system regularly inspected and pumped to ensure it is working properly and not contributing to pollution problems.
- If you do use detergents or fertilizers with phosphates be sure to follow the directions so you don't use too much.

Text adapted with permission from the Washington State Department of Ecology's webpage "*Reducing Phosphorus Pollution to Improve Water Quality*" [www.ecy.wa.gov](http://www.ecy.wa.gov).

## DID YOU KNOW...

One pound of phosphorus can grow 700 pounds of algae.

Source: *Historical Perspective of the Phosphate Detergent Conflict* by Chris Knud-Hansen, 1994.





Mike Mallon (below) and his wife Chris used the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to manage timber and reduce hazardous fuels on their property in the Entiat valley (right).



## LOCAL LANDOWNERS USE FEDERAL PROGRAM TO MANAGE TIMBER & WILDFIRE

Entiat area landowners Mike and Chris Mallon have been working with the NRCS and other public agencies to manage their forestland since 1979. Over the years they have used programs like the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to manage hazardous fuels on their property and restore productivity after one of the worst wildfires in Washington State history.

When the Mallons bought their property in 1975 it was largely unmanaged and full of hazardous fuels. They partnered with NRCS to construct an irrigation pond in 1979 and implement forest management practices in 1984 and again in 1987 and 1988.

The NRCS provided technical and cost-share assistance enabling them to clear a woodland pasture, and prune and thin 22 of the 40 acres they owned at the time.

In 1994 the Tye Creek fire burned approximately 135,000 acres in the area including much of the Mallons' property. The fuels reduction work completed in the late 1980s helped spare the Mallons' home and prevented the forest fire from reaching the crowns of their trees like it did on nearby properties. They averted catastrophe as a result, but still lost thirty percent of their merchantable timber and were left with a mess of dead and diseased trees to deal with.

The Mallons and a neighbor performed post-fire clean-up work on 72 acres in 1997. Together they planted 3000 seedlings and removed a quarter of a million board feet of trees that were

either killed or left compromised by the fire. Despite all of their hard work, heavy fuel loading remained and additional restoration work was needed.

In 2005 the Mallons partnered with NRCS again and successfully applied for EQIP funding. The assistance provided through the program permitted them to reduce fuels on 40 acres of their land and replant 2500 seedlings on an additional 60 acres of their land. Their EQIP contract will also help fund future efforts to reseed steep slopes left bare by the fire and vulnerable to erosion.

Mike and Chris Mallon have invested a lot of time, money and hard work into their land. When asked why they do it, Mike replied, "Good fire management is good timber management and vice versa." They are pleased with the assistance provided through the NRCS. "I think EQIP is a great program." Mike said.

By reducing fuel levels on their property, the Mallons are effectively reducing the potential intensity of future forest fires and giving their home and their timberland a fighting chance.

***"Good fire management is good timber management and vice versa."***

**-Mike Mallon**  
EQIP Participant

## FEDERAL PROGRAM SHARES THE COSTS OF CONSERVATION

We all want to do what is right for our land, but we don't always have the money or know-how needed to get the job done. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) may be able to help.

The NRCS administers a number of programs aimed at promoting voluntary conservation activities on private lands. They are currently accepting applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, or EQIP.

EQIP offers technical assistance and cost incentives to qualifying agricultural producers and forest landowners who are interested in protecting natural resources on their land. Landowners interested in applying for fiscal year 2009 have until July 15 to schedule a site visit and get their application in. Applications received by the deadline will be competitively ranked based on the potential positive impacts on prioritized resource concerns for the region. Applications received after the cut-off date will be considered for future funding periods.

According to the NRCS, Washington agricultural producers and forest landowners qualified for more than \$30 million in financial assistance through EQIP in 2006 and 2007. Don't get left out! If you are interested in being a part of the EQIP program in 2009 contact Justin Mount, NRCS Resource Conservationist at the Wenatchee Field Office (509) 664-0275.

### HOW CAN EQIP HELP YOU?

Up to 75% of the costs of approved conservation practices may be funded through the EQIP program.

Examples of commonly approved practices in our region include:

- cover crops
- pest management
- forest slash treatment
- pre-commercial thinning
- forest stand improvement
- tree & shrub establishment and pruning
- windbreak & shelterbelt establishment
- riparian forest buffer
- habitat restoration & management
- irrigation system upgrades
- spring development
- access road improvements



## 2008 PLANT SALE A BIG SUCCESS

Chelan County's landscape continues to flourish! Our annual plant sale was once again a huge success. This year more than 7,300 native trees and shrubs were distributed to over 80 customers and contributed to three local habitat restoration projects.

Cascadia Conservation District board and staff members would like to offer a special thanks to Stemilt staff Les Sickles, John Beardsley, Ted Cutright, and Eusebio "Jr." Alvarez in shipping and receiving, and the crews that support them. This is the eighth year Stemilt has supported our plant sale by donating essential cold storage space.

We would also like to thank volunteers Jeff Hampton, and Lynne and Kirk Terrell for their hard work, as well as biologist and photographer Thayne Tuason of Central Washington Native Plants ([www.cwnp.org](http://www.cwnp.org)) for the use of her fantastic plant photos. Without the support of these people our sale would not have been such a success.



**Is there a native plant you would like to see offered next year?**

**Contact Valerie at (509) 664-0275 or [valerie.hampton@wa.nacdnet.net](mailto:valerie.hampton@wa.nacdnet.net)**



**CASCADIA**  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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This newsletter is funded in part by grants from the Washington State Department of Ecology and the Washington State Conservation Commission.

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Kate Koenig, *Resource Specialist*



#### Historical Photos

- 1) Cooperators Bob and Clayton Merry work with Gordon Stubbe to develop a recreational farm plan. (1963)
- 2) Gordon Stubbe and Belvin Gollaher travel to a snow survey site in the Wenatchee Mountains. (1975)
- 3) Don Nicholson roto-beats a cover crop in his orchard. (1960)
- 4) Cooperators Bob & Nellie Merry check pheasant eggs in incubator. (1966)
- 5) Wenatchee-Entiat Soil & Water Conservation District supervisors. (1971)  
Standing L to R:  
Alfred Dormaier and Gordon Stubbe (SCS).  
Seated L to R:  
Leo Gutzwiler, Donald Nicholson, Belvin Gollaher, and Cyril Balch.
- 6) Gordon Stubbe and Belvin Gollaher conduct a snow survey in the Wenatchee Mountains. (1975)
- 7) Vern Beieler, Soil Scientist lectures a 5th grade class on conservation at the Squilchuck State Park. (1978)

All photos were taken by the USDA Soil Conservation Service.

## HISTORY (Continued from page 1)

*and that the preservation of these lands is necessary to protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of its people."*

In 1947, two districts were formed in Chelan County via the petition process: the Lake Chelan Soil Conservation District and the Wenatchee-Entiat Soil Conservation District. Both districts were issued certificates in March 1948.

Both districts were run by a volunteer board of supervisors just like they are today. The district supervisors established resource priorities for the work of their federal partner the Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service or NRCS), and they often volunteered their time to help implement conservation projects.

Early projects for the two districts included developing soil surveys and farm plans, and publishing conservation guides with recommendations for cover crops and irrigation practices to reduce erosion and improve pasture production. The two districts also played a role in the design and construction of a number of local reservoirs.

The Lake Chelan and Wenatchee-Entiat Soil Conservation Districts merged in 1973 to become the Chelan County Conservation District. Over the years, incorporated cities grew up that were not officially part of the districts' 1947 boundaries. In recent years all but two of those cities, the cities of Chelan and Wenatchee, opted to become part of the district.

In keeping with the effort to remind citizens that districts are a separate entity from either city or county government, we changed our name in July 2007 to the Cascadia Conservation District. Today's members of the Board of Supervisors oversee the work of ten paid staff members. Like their predecessors, they believe in the wise use of natural resources and the value of voluntary, locally-led conservation in our communities.