

Improvements to Water, Soil, and Air Across the County

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Land managers from several different areas in Okanogan County have been busy implementing projects with Okanogan CD. In this issue, we feature four projects that are helping ensure the long-term health and productivity of our local natural resources. Got a project in mind? Give us a call!

Doubletree Farm, Twisp

Did you know that there is a WSDA-licensed Grade A Dairy in Okanogan County? Owner-operator Sam Thrasher produces pasteurized, non-homogenized, whole cow's milk for the Methow and Okanogan valleys. Sam practices rotational grazing on irrigated pastures and plants and harvests hay crops to feed the cows during the winter.

All cow dairies in Washington are required to develop and implement a Nutrient Management Plan certified by their local conservation district. These plans outline how the farmer can best utilize on-farm nutrients, while also minimizing impacts to resources such as water, soil, and air. Okanogan CD developed the plan for Doubletree Farm, including nutrient and irrigation management recommendations, and suggested practices that would improve water quality. Thanks to a grant from the Washington State Conservation Commission, Okanogan CD worked with Sam to install a roof runoff structure on her barn, keeping water out of a heavy use area where it could pick up sediment and nutrients. *Continued*



The newly installed roof runoff structure on the barn will improve water quality.



Rotating the cows through different pastures allows plants to rest, rebuild vigor, and deepen their root system.

Improvements, Continued

Now the water can infiltrate directly underground, protecting water quality. Doubletree Farm covered 25% of the total project cost through this 75/25 cost-share program.

With only one cow dairy in the county, creating a Nutrient Management Plan was a new experience for Okanogan CD staff. We would like to thank Sam for her patience as we learned the ropes alongside her, and for her great work implementing the plan. We would also like to thank Lyle Stoltman, the Livestock Program Coordinator with Grant County Conservation District who assisted us greatly. Rachel McClure, Natural Resource Technician, will continue to assist Sam this fall to complete the final requirements. If you are considering operating a cow dairy or feedlot in Okanogan County or have general nutrient management questions, please contact Rachel at 509-422-0855 x. 104.

Oberg Brothers Beef, Tonasket

Mark Timmerman is a fourth generation farmer in the Havillah area of the Okanogan Highlands. He raises hay and grass-fed natural beef. He has received technical assistance from Okanogan CD several times in the past to protect the natural resources on his property. The focus of this year's project was a stock watering facility at "Grandpa's Place". This spot is where his relatives first homesteaded the area and is now used for pasture. The spring-fed trough was bogged down from numerous years of use and not working correctly. The cows also had access to the spring nearby where they were causing damage. With funding received from the Washington State Conservation Commission, Okanogan CD staff worked with Mark to install 972 feet of pipe, a 1,200 gallon trough, and fenced off 406 feet of wetland. Mark completed the project in June 2019, providing 25% of the project costs through this 75/25 cost share program. He looks forward to grazing his cows in the rehabilitated pasture and is planning more projects with Okanogan CD.



Trough condition before (above) and after (below) at Grandpa's Place

Community Chipping Events

Okanogan CD received a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to reduce backyard burning. Smoke from debris burning contains harmful particulates (PM 2.5) that increase the risk of heart disease and aggravate respiratory ailments. Chipping is a great option to reduce smoke, keep debris out of our shrinking county landfill, and produces smaller material for compost piles. Okanogan CD put on three chipping events in Spring 2019. The first event was a partnership with the Edelweiss Home Owners' Association in Mazama. This was a "roving chipper" event where homeowners signed up ahead of time, set their woody debris out along the roadside, and the contractor came through on

continued

Improvements, Continued

set dates to chip the material. The resulting chips went back onto the property to be used by the property owner. 42 participants had the equivalent of 90 pickup truck loads chipped.

The second “roving chipper” event took place within the city limits of Okanogan. Okanogan CD partnered with the City of Okanogan Public Works department, who chipped the debris put out on the roadside. 25 residents participated, amassing 57 pickup truck loads of debris. Chips from woody material at the Virginia Grainger Elementary School in Okanogan went directly to the school garden. Finally, Okanogan CD joined other members of the Okanogan River Airshed Partnership to bring chipping to the annual Omak Clean Up Day. City of Omak supplied the chipper and crew to chip 40 pickup truck loads totaling 20,000 pounds. The chips were available to the public for free after the event. Okanogan CD has plans for future events in the county. To keep up to date on events, follow us on Facebook and check the website at www.okanogancd.org.



The cities of Okanogan (above) and Omak (below) each partnered with Okanogan CD to chip woody debris.

In total, the three spring events kept nearly 47 tons of material out of the landfill and 752 pounds of PM 2.5 out of our community's lungs.

Jim Anderson, Okanogan

Okanogan CD provided 75/25 cost-share assistance to remove garbage from the Okanogan river bank and install native trees and shrubs. Hoses, pipes, a lawnmower, a bicycle, and seventeen tires were removed and hauled to the landfill. Jim then planted a diversity of trees and shrubs to accomplish multiple goals: bank protection, maintaining scenic views by strategic placement of short and tall shrubs, and providing food for wildlife with berry producing plants. Jim also installed brush piles to capture sediment, provide habitat for wildlife, protect new shrubs, and improve the soil as they decompose. Does your property need some help? Give Hannah Coe a call at (509) 422-0855 x. 116 or email hannah@okanogancd.org.



Before (L) and after (R) at the Anderson property

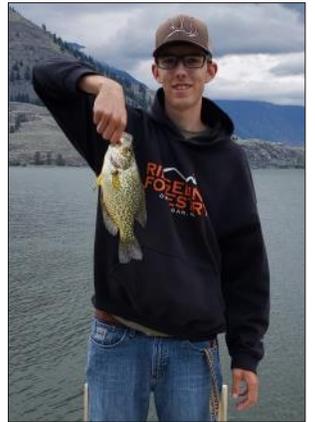
A Few Words from Our Interns

2019 brought us not one, not two, but three fantastic interns! Each graduated recently from Okanogan High School. We asked Paxton Wood, Dylan Streeter, and Justin Stanley to share some of their experiences as Okanogan CD interns.

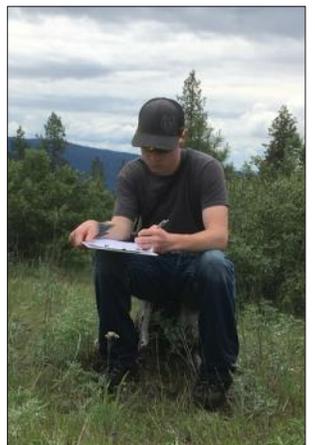
Paxton: I started in mid-June after I graduated from Okanogan High School. I couldn't pass up the opportunity to work at the conservation district before I leave to start my future endeavors. I am very grateful for this opportunity as it has been a fun summer of work. Most of my hours have been out in the field, and there is no place I would rather be than working outside. I've monitored Department of Natural Resource (DNR) transects, which is a process of counting grass in pre-established plots. On the rare occasion when I am not in field, I spread my time between transect data entry and odd office jobs. I have learned so much in the short amount of time I have been here, most of which I would never have had the opportunity to learn otherwise.



Dylan: I started at the Conservation District this summer after my freshman year at University of Idaho, where I study forestry and rangeland management. I have taken part in many different projects so far, but the main project I work on is completing the DNR transect monitoring. For this project, I get to go all around the county and measure the ground cover and plant community diversity. I have also spent time doing wildfire risk assessments, where I give homeowners recommendations on how to make their home as fire resistant as possible. This summer has been full of new experiences and learning, and I can't wait to see where this career can take me!



Justin: This is my second summer at the Okanogan Conservation District. I just finished my freshman year at University of Idaho, pursuing a degree in rangeland management. This summer has been full of hands-on rangeland work, from range inventory on a 17,000-acre range unit, to rangeland transects spread across Okanogan county. It's been fun working on both projects because one of them is through the Colville Confederated Tribes and the other is through the DNR. It's been a good experience seeing how different agencies approach their work with different management styles. I hope to come back next summer and continue to further my knowledge of rangeland management.



Ready to save water? Get the most out of every drop with a **FREE** irrigation water management plan. But hurry! Funding for these plans ends December 2019. Contact Ricardo Angel at (509) 422-0855 x. 101 or email ricardo@okanogancd.org.

School Gardens Are Growing!

By Kim Kogler, Education Specialist

In February 2019, Okanogan CD received a grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts to support and promote school gardens in Okanogan County. The goal of the grant was to build on existing local interest and initiative by supplying a consistent framework for local school gardens. Currently, we are working with the garden near Virginia Grainger Elementary School in Okanogan, the East Omak Elementary School Garden, and the Tonasket School Garden.

Every month, the garden coordinators, garden board or council members, garden enthusiasts, and Okanogan CD staff meet to discuss successes, provide advice and support, and detail the next steps for each garden. We have been helped immensely by Classroom in Bloom, the nonprofit community garden founded in 2004 which serves the Methow Valley School District. Classroom in Bloom, with the guidance of all three school gardens, developed an Elementary School Garden Curriculum that will help teachers meet Next Generation Science Standards. Okanogan CD and Classroom in Bloom will showcase this curriculum at a **free Garden and Science Teachers Training Workshop on September 14th** (see next page for details). We'll train participants in the garden curriculum, offer free activity and education materials, and teach creative ways to involve students in garden work. By the end of this year, Okanogan Conservation District will create a Garden Starter Packet detailing the necessary steps to starting a school garden and listing helpful partnerships. This packet will be available to all educators, volunteers, and persons looking to start a school garden.

Garden accomplishments so far this year: the team in Okanogan expanded their garden space and built a shed to store garden tools. They also hosted the summer school once a week. East Omak's garden team restructured their garden, removing some beds and adding others. Okanogan CD staff helped them gravel the garden to limit weeds and watering. Tonasket's garden team began constructing work tables and raised beds in their greenhouse and hosted multiple garden parties for the community.

We thank the local communities surrounding these gardens for their support and active involvement in the gardens, as well as Classroom in Bloom for their guidance, wisdom, and hard work. For further questions about the monthly garden meetings, the free Garden and Science Teachers Training Workshop, the standards-based garden curriculum, or the Garden Starter Packet, contact Kim Kogler at kimberly@okanogancd.org.



The garden near VG Elementary overflows with food, flowers, and fun.



Kids get their hands dirty at the Tonasket School Garden.

Sign Up Now for School Programs

Are you a teacher, school administrator, or homeschool parent looking for high quality science experiences for your students? Okanogan Conservation District has programs for you!

We offer in-class and outdoor learning opportunities for students in Kindergarten through 12th grade. Our programs are designed to support current science standards and enhance your existing curriculum with hands-on activities that help students get to know the diverse ecology of Okanogan County. Best of all, our programs are provided **free of charge** thanks to generous funders like the Washington Department of Ecology, the Washington Conservation Commission, and others.

To learn more about our school programs, visit our website at: www.okanogancd.org/teachers-and-schools

You can also contact Education Specialist, Kim Kogler, by phone at (509) 422-0855 x. 117 or by email at kimberly@okanogancd.org.



FREE Teacher Training in September

Join Okanogan CD and Classroom in Bloom for this fun, outdoors, and hands-on program showcasing the Elementary School Garden Curriculum.

When: September 14th from 9 am– 12:30 pm

Where: Classroom in Bloom, Winthrop

Lunch and transportation will be provided at no cost to teachers thanks to grant funding from the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Teachers will also receive grade-specific, NGSS curriculum for gardens, including teaching materials to support the lessons.

3.5 clock hours expected to be available (pending approval by North Central Education Service District).

Reserve a space now by emailing Kim Kogler: kimberly@okanogancd.org.



Welcomes and a Farewell

We are excited to welcome two new staff members to Okanogan CD!

Jessica (Jess) McDaniel joined the team in June as our Administrative Assistant. “My husband and I recently moved to the area from rural King County. I graduated from the University of Washington in 2011; my educational background includes natural resource management, fisheries, statistics, and streamside studies, having . I enjoy being outdoors, experiencing the multiplicity of our world, fishing, and spending time with friends and family”. Jess will be helping staff handle financial and administrative duties to keep our programs efficient and effective. You can reach her at (509) 422-0855 x. 102 or jess@okanogancd.org



In August, Ricardo Angel started his position as Natural Resource Technician. Ricardo was born and raised in Brewster and went to University of Idaho for his bachelor's degree in Wildlife Management. He enjoys the outdoors, especially bass fishing, and hunting. Ricardo will help people increase the efficiency of their irrigation systems to mitigate drought concerns. Ricardo is available at (509) 422-0855 x. 101 or ricardo@okanogancd.org



Also in August, we said farewell to Allisa Carlson, our Wildlife Conservation Planner. Allisa accepted a position with the Washington State Conservation Commission as the Central Regional Manager. We are so grateful for the time Allisa committed to the Okanogan Conservation District and look forward to seeing her thrive in this new role. As the Central Regional Manager, Allisa will help Conservation Districts assist people with natural resource concerns. Good luck Allisa – we will miss you!



Look Out for Stranded Fish!



Drought is adding extra challenges this year. Low flow conditions can trap fish and block them from finding cool water, food, and spawning habitat. If you see stranded fish, contact Hannah Coe at (509) 422-0855 x. 116 or email WDFW at wildcomm@dfw.wa.gov. Include the location (GPS coordinates are best), a description (photos are helpful), and the date/time you observed fish stranding. To avoid injuring stranded fish, please don't "rescue" them yourself; call us!



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FREE wildfire education programs return to Wenatchee Valley College Omak this Fall!

Fire Ready Home and Landscape

Wednesday Oct. 16, 6-8 pm or
Wednesday Oct. 30, 6-8 pm

Managing Your Forest for Wildfire and Wildlife

Wednesday Oct. 23, 6-8 pm classroom
Saturday Oct. 26, 9 am-2 pm field trip (optional)

More details coming soon at www.okanogancd.org

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