

Kittitas County Conservation District

October 2020

Serving Landowners in Kittitas County Since 1942



November 20, 2020 Application Due Date Announced for RCPP Cost Share Program

ELLENSBURG, Wash. (September 28, 2020) – The Kittitas County Conservation District announces a November 20, 2020 application deadline for the “Yakima Integrated Plan - Toppenish To Teanaway” Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) project. The project can provide assistance with on-farm irrigation system improvements, livestock management practices (fences, watering facilities) and riparian and instream habitat. Funding is provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) of the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

EQIP is a voluntary, technical and financial assistance program through NRCS designed to help farmers, ranchers, and other private landowners/managers improve irrigation efficiency; reduce soil erosion; improve water quality; and improve fish habitat in priority streams. The contract payment rate pays for a portion of the cost of the contracted conservation practices implemented by the farmer or rancher.

The District is accepting applications immediately. Interested farmers, ranchers or landowners should contact the District at 509-925-3352 or 2211 W Dolarway Road, Ellensburg. Although this sign-up is being conducted by the District, all requirements of the EQIP program must still be met. Each applicant must establish themselves as a USDA customer and complete all Farm Service Agency (FSA) eligibility requirements. For more information about those requirements, contact the local NRCS field office at 2211 W Dolarway Road, Suite 6, Ellensburg or 509-925-8585 ext. 115.

RCPP Contracts (Active or Completed)

Conservation Practice	Units	Amount	Funds Obligated or Paid
430 - Irrigation Pipeline	Ft	56,943	\$460,593
533 - Pumping Plant	Ac	20	\$133,824
449 - Irrigation Water Management	No	1130.3	\$32,582
442 - Sprinkler System	Ac	1024	\$1,423,494
587 - Structure for Water Control	No	11	\$27,683
			\$2,078,175



Most of the projects are installed in the fall and winter months. This is a center pivot sprinkler under construction. The mainline delivers water from the source to the pivot.



Projects are assisted by KCCD staff and inspected by NRCS staff. Mark Crowley (KCCD), Konrad Bomberger (NRCS) and Lynelle Knehans (NRCS) check out the newly installed sprinkler system.

This is the fourth and final sign-up for this program. The first three (conducted in 2017, 2018 and 2019) have produced 19 contracts with landowners providing \$2 million to improve irrigation water use efficiency on more than 1,000 acres of cropland in Kittitas County. This funding is available as part of the “Yakima Integrated Plan - Toppenish To Teanaway” project. The project was one of 88 high impact projects across the country that was approved for funding through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program in December 2016. For more information, visit the project webpage at <https://www.kccd.net/rcpp>.



COVID-19 has not stopped meetings with producers, but it has resulted in lots of tailgate meetings with face coverings. Mark Crowley (KCCD) and Konrad Bomberger (NRCS) meet with producers to discuss an RCPP contract.

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Kittitas County Conservation District
2211 W Dolarway, Suite #4
Ellensburg, WA 98926

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Fish screen (structure for water control) installed on an irrigation diversion serving a newly installed pivot system.

KCCCD Annual Election & Appointments for Board Members

Each Conservation District in Washington is governed by a board of five members, referred to as “supervisors.” Three supervisors are elected locally by registered voters in the conservation district boundaries. Two are appointed by the Washington State Conservation Commission. At least three of the supervisors must be landowners or operators of a farm per RCW 89.08. The term of office is three years. Supervisors serve without compensation — they are volunteers.

Conservation District elections are conducted per Chapter 135-110 of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). There is one elected position expiring in 2021 on the KCCCD Board. All Conservation District elections occur in the first quarter of the calendar year (January-March). The KCCCD election is traditionally held the second Tuesday in February.

Applications for appointed positions are held by the Washington State Conservation Commission and are due March 31. In 2021, there are no expiring appointed positions at the KCCCD.

Tentative* Dates for 2021 KCCCD Election

→ December 10, 2020

Adopt Election Resolution establishing election date and procedures

→ January 12, 2021

Interested individuals complete and submit candidate information form

→ January 19, 2021

Deadline to request absentee ballots

→ February 9, 2021

Election Day

*Follow <https://www.kccd.net/> elections for confirmation of these dates and all other information about the 2021 KCCCD election

Who can serve on the Board?

A candidate for election to the KCCCD Board must be a registered voter who resides within the KCCCD boundary (unincorporated areas of the County and the cities of Cle Elum and Roslyn) at the time of filing. The candidate may also need to be a landowner or operator of a farm in order to maintain the required two on the Board.

Who can vote in the KCCCD Election?

All registered voters in Kittitas County who reside within the KCCCD boundary (unincorporated areas of the County and the cities of Cle Elum and Roslyn) are eligible to cast ballots in the election.

Kittitas County Conservation District

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Mark Moore - Chair (Elected - term expires 2022)

Lynn Brown - Vice Chair (Appointed - term expires in 2023)

Jeff Brunson - Auditor (Elected - term expires in 2021)

Bill Boyum - Member (Appointed - term expires in 2022)

Matt Eslinger - Member (Elected - term expires in 2023)

DISTRICT STAFF

Anna Lael - District Manager

Miranda Nash - Financial Manager

Mark Crowley - Conservation Planner

Sherry Swanson - Manastash Project Manager

Ryan Roberts - District Engineer

Brent Dixon - Natural Resource Project Manager

Wendy Mee - Resource Technician

Nathan Longoria - Resource Technician

MEETINGS

Board meetings are generally held on the second Thursday of each month at the District office. The schedule for the year is as follows:

April through October - 7:00 a.m.

November through March - 1:00 p.m.

Meeting notices are also posted on the District web page (<https://www.kccd.net/district-documents>) and at the District office. Additional special meetings are held as needed throughout the year. For more information or to receive e-mail notifications of meetings, contact Miranda at 925-3352 ext 201 or m-nash@conservewa.net

PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The District's Long Range Plan 2017-2021 and Annual Plan of Work for FY 2021 (July 2020 to June 2021) are available at <https://www.kccd.net/district-documents> or at the District office.

COVID 19 Response

The KCCCD office remains open to the public by appointment at this time. Anyone wishing to enter the KCCCD office is asked to use a face covering and to avoid coming in if they've been exposed to COVID-19 or have a cough or fever. KCCCD staff are available to do field visits and will do so observing social distancing requirements. KCCCD Board meetings are being conducted virtu-

ally until further notice. The meetings are held on Zoom and the information for each meeting is available on the District website at <https://www.kccd.net/district-documents>. There is an option to just call in telephonically, so interested parties don't need a laptop or even a smartphone to participate. Please contact Miranda at 925-3352 ext. 201 for assistance.

What Services are Available through the KCCD?

KCCD's focus is on creating and maintaining resilient working landscapes across Kittitas County. This effort involves providing landowners and land managers ("cooperators") with technical, financial and educational assistance through our projects and programs. As part of that effort, our technical staff can provide an array of services that generally begin with a site visit to understand the natural resource conditions and the cooperators concerns. This includes cooperators of all types, from small acreages (some ag operations, some not), to larger family farms, to homeowners in higher wildfire risk areas and everything in between.

Planning and developing the conservation practices needed to address the resource conditions (e.g. soil health, water use efficiency, fish & wildlife habitat, forest health) and the cooperators concerns is the next step. Following that initial effort, work begins towards finding financial incentives to implement the planned practices, like irrigation system upgrades, cover crops, fencing, native tree and shrub plantings, forest stand thinning, etc. Since the KCCD is almost entirely grant funded, these financial incentives can come from a variety of sources and as with all grants, come with various strings. It is then up to the landowner whether to apply and/or accept funding to implement the practices.

While this sounds like a linear process, it is often much messier depending on the particular resource concern, the cooperators desires, and the potential funding sources. KCCD has searched out and secured funding for individual specific projects for a single cooperator. This works because the cooperator is willing to accept funding for practices that are a high priority in the region. An example of this would be the various fish passage projects completed at irrigation diversion structures. We also have secured funding to address particular resource concerns without necessarily having specific developed projects with cooperators. An example of this is the RCPP funding (see page 1) which is available to many cooperators. Having already established that water quantity is the highest priority resource concern, we worked with partners to secure funding for irrigation water use efficiency projects (e.g. converting from rill to sprinkler irrigation). Sign-ups are then conducted for that particular funding source following the funding agency's requirements. Similarly, we secured funding for wildfire fuels mitigation ("Firewise") work with

landowners in the wildland urban interface areas of the County.

We also provide educational opportunities. While 2020 has been a difficult year to provide the in-person opportunities, we did manage to conduct a Soil Health Workshop in February. We also typically present at grower meetings, homeowner association meetings, community meetings and anywhere else we are requested. We facilitate the Annual Agricultural Apprecia-



Anna Lael (KCCD) presenting information about the Voluntary Stewardship Program to a group of producers.



Wendy Mee (KCCD) identifying and assessing wetland species for a potential planting project.

tion Day with third graders from across the County. Unfortunately, this year's event was cancelled, but we are looking forward to 2021. We maintain a website with information like our "Virtual Workshop for Landowners" that provides a series of videos about creating and maintaining defensible space. That can be viewed here: <https://www.kccd.net/fire-adapted-communities>. Our staff are available to present on many different topics to groups of all ages in our County.



Flow Monitoring: Sherry Swanson (KCCD) measuring stream flow to help with design of a project to improve fish passage.



Ryan Roberts (KCCD), Mark Crowley (KCCD), and engineers from Anderson Perry & Associates at a site visit for a fish passage and screening project construction. This project was designed by Anderson Perry and overseen by KCCD staff.

Who is the Kittitas County Conservation District?

The Kittitas County Conservation District works with local landowners and land managers (public and private) to conserve natural resources that are vital to our economy and our quality of life. At the heart of our work are collaborative efforts to partner with landowners, public agencies, tribes and the general public to create and maintain resilient working landscapes through voluntary incentive-based measures. We are also a political subdivision of the state organized under RCW 89.08. Our District's roots run deep in the community. The Kittitas Conservation District was created in 1942, followed by the Cle Elum Conservation District in 1948, as part of a national response to the

Dust Bowl. The two districts combined in the 1960's to create the Kittitas County Conservation District. Although we have County in our name, we are not part of County government. We are separate entity with a Board of Supervisors who are volunteers and a staff primarily supported by grant funding. We have many partners from small local non-profits all the way up to federal agencies and everything in between. One of our oldest partners is the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service. Today, we are located in the same building as the USDA Service Center that includes both NRCS and the Farm Service Agency.

KCCD Available Services:

- ➔ Site visits with technical staff to assess agricultural practices and needs, native habitat, defensible space, etc.
- ➔ Water flow measurements (stream, ditch, etc.)
- ➔ GIS Mapping for farm planning purposes
- ➔ Drone Data Collection (thermal and multispectral options)
- ➔ Presentations to all sizes of groups by technical and management staff about natural resource topics and programs

Soil Health and Cover Crops

Back in February, the KCCD hosted a Soil Health Workshop featuring noted regional expert Marlon Winger (USDA NRCS). Marlon's presentations started with a review of Soil Health basics and an introduction to the core principles for restoring soil function:

- Minimize Disturbance of the soil
- Maximize Diversity of plants in rotation/cover crops
- Keep Living Roots in the soil as much as possible
- Keep the soil covered at all times with plants and plant residues
- Integrate livestock on the cropland

Marlon's message was focused around understanding soil health and soil biology so that more natural conditions can be achieved on-farm by encouraging natural functions. He encourages producers to choose practices that build soil organic matter, that minimize disturbance soil aggregates, and that support a stable condition without major swings in temperature, water, and chemistry. This especially includes reduced tillage practices and use of cover crops.

Cover crops slow the velocity of runoff from rain-

fall and snowmelt, and reduce soil loss due to sheet and rill erosion. Over time, a cover crop regimen will increase soil organic matter, leading to improvements in soil structure, stability, and increased moisture and nutrient holding capacity for plant growth.

Livestock is an important component of the cover crop rotation. Animals, plants, and soils have played a synergistic role over geological time. In recent years though, animals are playing a reduced role due to being placed in confinement and fewer farms now include livestock as part of their overall operation. Returning livestock to the landscape can provide significant benefits. Fall or winter grazing converts high carbon annual crop residue to low carbon organic material; balances the carbon/nitrogen ratio. Spring or summer grazing with short grazing exposure periods followed by long recovery periods allows the plants to regrow. It also reduces nutrient export from our cropland and hayland fields by having the livestock graze the material in place. Grazing cover crops and/or crop residue allows producer to remove livestock from perennial grasslands earlier in the fall. [adopted from Soil Pamphlet by Marlon Winger]

COVER CROPS

Cover crops have the potential to provide multiple benefits in a cropping system. They can prevent soil and wind erosion, improve soil's physical and biological properties, supply nutrients, suppress

weeds, improve the availability of soil water, and break pest cycles along with various other benefits. The species of cover crop selected along with its management determine the benefits and returns.



Local producers are experimenting with cover crops. This 10-species mix was planted in July 2020. It includes peas, beans, vetch, corn, sudan grass, millet, oats, collards, turnips, and sunflower. It was seeded into an existing stand of timothy hay that was sprayed out after first cutting.



Livestock grazing is an important component of the cover crop implementation. Here the mix planted in July is being grazed in late September. Once grazing is complete, a winter cover crop will be planted and the site will be grazed again in the spring.

EQIP Classic Application Cutoff Date for Fiscal Year 2021: November 20, 2020

SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash. (September 4, 2020) - USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced today the application deadlines for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Classic in Washington State with a strong focus on conservation planning, conservation implementation, and solving natural resource concerns.

EQIP is a voluntary, technical and financial assistance program designed to help farmers, ranchers, private forestland owners, Tribes and other private landowners/managers with the application of conservation measures, such as: forestland health improvements, irrigation efficiency, nutrient run-off and/or animal waste management; improving native plant community health, removing manmade instream obstructions for fish passage, and reducing soil loss from wind or rain. In most instances, program participants can expect to pay roughly half of the costs associated with implementation of the conservation measures or practices.

Each applicant must establish themselves as a USDA customer and obtain all Farm Service Agency (FSA) eligibility requirements by November 20, 2020. Please note, Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) determination takes an average three weeks to be processed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). It is highly recommended that applicants submit their completed AGI form to FSA several weeks prior to the FSA eligibility determination deadline of November 20, 2020.

Submitting your AGI form to FSA on the last day of the application period will result in your AGI eligibility not being met within Protracts by the deadline for fiscal year 2021.

Although applications are accepted on a year-round basis, eligible applicants interested in EQIP Classic must have completed the following actions by November 20, 2020 to be considered for funding in fiscal year 2021:

- Obtain all necessary FSA eligibility determinations (AD1026, AGI, FTE) within Protracts.
- Submit their CCC-1200 EQIP application to their local NRCS office.

For more information about the EQIP program or FSA eligibility, please refer to the USDA Washington Natural Resources Conservation Service website: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/wa/programs/financial/>.

"EQIP is a voluntary program to facilitate the adoption and improvement of natural resource management to increase private land resources sustainability," says Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, Keith Griswold. "Please do not wait until the last day to submit your application or attain FSA eligibility determination. It could reduce your chances to treat your identified resource concerns in 2021". To learn about technical and financial assistance available through conservation programs, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted or your local USDA service center at 2211 W Dolarway Road, Ellensburg.

What's the difference between this program and the one advertised on page 1?

This is EQIP classic which is the traditional program available to producers across the country. In the past the applications were ranked based on criteria established by the Big Bend Local Work Group (LWG). Each LWG in the state had a pot of funding to work from. The RCPP project advertised on the page 1 is also EQIP funding, but it is just for Kittitas County. The RCPP applications are ranked a bit differently because that project has more specific conservation goals. The RCPP applications are taken by KCCD and the development of plans and contracts are assisted by KCCD staff, where the EQIP Classic is handled primarily by NRCS staff.

KCCD encourages producers to apply for both programs to ensure maximum opportunity for funding.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Holly Taylor, Resource Conservationist (Ellensburg)
509-925-8585 ext 115

Erin Kaczmarczyk, District Conservationist (Ephrata)
509.754.2463 ext.3251

Austin Shero, Central Area Conservationist (Ephrata)
509.717.3257 or 509.906.6585 (cell)



Natural Resources Conservation Service

Kittitas County Wildfire Fuels Reduction Program Underway

After the Taylor Bridge Fire in 2012, the Kittitas County Fire Marshal requested assistance through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. The request was funded at 50% and the County proceeded to subcontract the work to KCCD. We implemented the \$250,000 project which involved cost share agreements with landowners to thin and remove vegetation to reduce fire risk.

The following year, another opportunity opened up and a second application was submitted for the other half of that original request. Fast forward several years now and finally those funds are being offered to landowners. Through cooperative work with the Board of County Commissioners and County staff, we were able to transfer the agreement directly to KCCD to reduce administrative costs for everyone involved. We are now offering cost share funds and implementing projects with landowners under the "Kittitas County Wildfire Fuels Reduction Program".

This project is focused on very specific

geographic areas that were in the 2015 grant application. They were chosen as high risk at that time establishing these project boundaries:

- Sunlight Waters
- Middle Fork Teanaway (Wagon Wheel)
- North Cle Elum Ridge (approximately Lanigan Springs west to Summit View Road)
- South Cle Elum Ridge (approximately Hidden Springs Road to Woods & Steele)

Landowners in these areas are eligible for cost share assistance to create and improve defensible space and manage vegetation around homes. Site visits are the first step to determine needs and establish a plan. In addition to cost share for projects, KCCD also offers chipping services for small amounts of work that the landowner can accomplish themselves. Contact Wendy at 509-925-3352 ext. 204 or wendy-mee@conservewa.net to learn more about the available assistance.



KCCD partnered with Kittitas County Fire District #1 and the Roslyn Fire Department (who provided their crew) to work on a fuels reduction project in Sunlight Waters this summer.

This FEMA funded project complies with all applicable federal and state non-discrimination laws, regulations, and policies. No person shall, on the grounds of age, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, marital status, honorably discharged veteran or military status, or disability (physical, mental, or sensory) be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any project, program, or activity, funded, in whole or in part.

How a Small Forest Owner Survived the Cold Springs Fire

By: Guy Gifford, Landowner Assistance Forester & Fire Prevention and Firewise Coordinator, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Northeast Region,

It was Sunday night, September 6, at about 10 p.m. Kirsten Cook, her husband, and two of their friends were stargazing when one of the friends saw and pointed out some "cool puffy clouds."

When Cook looked over at what her friend was talking about, she quickly realized what they were seeing.

"Those aren't clouds," she said. "That's a smoke column."

The group was witnessing the start of what would eventually be called the Cold Springs Fire. Little did they know, this fire would soon put to the test the Firewise work Cook and her husband had done to protect their home.

Considering the windy conditions and the proximity of the fire, they quickly made the decision to evacuate.

Their adrenaline was pumping, but

they did their best to stay calm and rely on the preparations they had made for such an event. Moving quickly, they went first for their emergency kits, which contained water and food, among other supplies. Luckily, their camping gear was already in the car. Then they grabbed their emergency checklist and carefully worked through each item.

"The list gave me focus in a tense situation and helped us get everything we needed to evacuate quickly," Cook said, recalling the intensity of the moment.

They were on their way out of the house when they were notified on their cellphone by the Okanogan County alert system that their area had just been put on a level 2 evacuation notice. Following the alert instructions, they got in their cars and drove to the Okanogan County Fairgrounds to set up camp and wait out the fire.

The next day, they watched the fire burn over Jackass Butte, which they

knew wasn't far from their house. Their hearts sank as they realized the fire must have burned through their property to get there. Still not knowing if their home had survived, they decided to drive to Seattle and stay with friends while they waited out the fire and avoided the smoke.

It wasn't until the following Tuesday that they heard from a friend who was still in the area. Their home had survived with minimal damage. However, all of the outbuildings and their contents had been lost.

So, what did Cook and her husband do ahead of time to be prepared for this disaster?

Early in Cook's career, she worked as a wildland firefighter. This gave her some critical insight into the destruction wildfire can wreak and also laid the groundwork for her to eventually become the community outreach director for the Okanogan Conservation District. In this position, she regularly works with the Firewise USA program,

Washington Fire Adapted Communities, as well as one-on-one with the public to encourage residents to implement practices that protect homes from wildfire.

In 2007, Cook and her husband bought a piece of property in Okanogan County with the goal of someday building their dream home on it. It took a few years, but they broke ground on the homesite in 2013 and finished construction a year later.

As an ecologist, she knew the ground this house sat on was a fire-adapted ecosystem. Prior to European settlement, this area likely would have burned once per decade. Records show the most recent burn on the site was in 1986, 34 years ago. With the knowledge that fire was a natural and frequently occurring event for her home site, she knew she had to take steps to minimize the potential impacts of a wildfire on their home.



The post-fire landscape around the Cook homesite in Okanogan County. (Photo by Kirsten Cook)

Wildfire *Continued from page 5*

“It wasn’t a question of if a wildfire will burn my property, but when will it burn my property,” Cook said.

Cook followed a key Firewise principal: She focused her efforts on the Home Ignition Zone. This principle breaks up the area around a home into three zones, with each zone requiring unique fire-prevention work.

Zone 1, or the immediate zone, extends 5 feet from the home in all directions, including the deck and attachments. The goal for this area is to ensure burning embers landing near the home will not ignite a fire. Cook did some vital work in this zone, even while the house was being built. They used stucco for siding material, installed a metal roof, and used concrete for the porch instead of wood. Metal screens with 1/8” squares, which are better at blocking embers, were used on the porch and all vents. On the ground, she used gravel to create a 6-foot, vegetation-free buffer around the entire house.

In the next zone, the intermediate zone, which covers the area 5 to 30 feet from the house, the primary goal is to provide the fire with little, or nothing, to burn.

Cook’s homesite has limited water availability, so rather than trying to keep things green, they chose to simply remove all vegetation and do their best to keep it this way during the fire season. When the Cold Springs Fire came through, there was some low-intensity burning in this area, but the lack of vegetation ensured there wasn’t enough radiant heat to ignite the home itself.

In the extended zone, 30-plus feet from the home, the aim is not to eliminate fire but instead to reduce fire intensity. This is where forest management comes into play. The vegetation in the extended zone around Cook’s home was typical for the area: native bunch grasses, sagebrush, and ponderosa pine trees. Here, they worked to remove any highly flammable shrubs like bitterbrush, mowed native grasses and forbs after they went dormant in July, and thinned and pruned trees to reduce the fuel load and potential fuel ladders.

The Cold Springs Fire started on September 6 at 9:45 p.m. near Omak, and went on to burn 189,923 acres, killing a 1-year-old child and severely burning his parents. In addition, 78 primary residences and 60 secondary buildings were lost or damaged by the wildfire. The aggregate effects of all Cook’s work meant a relatively unscathed home to return to after the fire

was over. The fact that they didn’t hesitate to evacuate when the time came meant they could return home unscathed as well.

When they got back to the house, she saw a few notable things. The first was that during the fire the wind had piled burning material in front of their metal front door. Cook is certain if they had chosen a wooden door, their home would have easily ignited from this.

Another observation was that, although there was a good deal of fine ash on her screened-in porch, there was no evidence of any embers getting through. In her attic, she found more fine ash blown in through the vents and one or two small black dots that may have been a burning ember, but the 1/8” screen had largely done its job.

Despite the fact that their fire-proofing work certainly saved their home, there are a couple of things Cook says she would have done differently. For one, the power pole for their generator, which they had not taken steps to protect, had clearly burned, so they plan on doing some landscaping and putting metal around the new pole when it is installed.

Even the smallest details matter. The outbuilding that stored their generator was built with a metal roof

and fiber cement siding, but the door was not properly shutting, so they had been using a bungee cord to keep it closed. She believes the fire melted the bungee cord and the wind blew the door open allowing embers in. The building burned down and took the large generator with it. Fixing the door had been on their to-do list.

One thing they'll add to their checklist is latching the windows. When they evacuated their home, their windows were shut but not latched, which meant coming home to a layer of fine ash covering her the inside of their home.

Cook is currently working with her insurance company on her claims for the outbuildings burning down as well as the materials in them.

Creating a list of all items lost by sifting through the rubble is difficult, if not impossible. Insurance companies will not compensate for "miscellaneous" lost items.

Fortunately, in 2015, Cook had video recorded the contents of her out building and home when she was concerned about the Okanogan Complex wildfires. This video has been critical in helping them make insurance claims, although Cook is regretting not getting footage of the contents of all the drawers and inside the toolboxes.

This video was stored on her laptop and backed up on a thumb drive. Both of these items were on their evacuation checklist to take with them.

Having now seen her home go through a wildfire firsthand, Cook has a couple of take-home messages for other folks who live in high-risk areas:

- Pay attention to local weather and be able to identify

the signs for high wildfire potential.

- Do not wait to evacuate. If you think there is potential of fire burning your property, leave before the fire arrives.

- Have an evacuation plan and a checklist. This will help you stay focused and ensure you grab everything you need.

- Sign up for local county emergency alerts.

- Don't underestimate the ability of Firewise principles to protect your home.

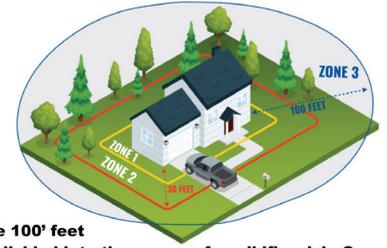
- Have a good list, or at least a video, of everything you own. This includes looking in every drawer, toolbox, or other container with valuables inside.

- Remember – our lives are more important than our things!

Having prepared for this disaster ahead of time is helping Cook and her husband get back to normal much more quickly than if they had done nothing. In hindsight, these efforts were a small investment with a huge return.

Free to Communities in Kittitas County

Defensible Space Consultation



Defensible space is the 100' feet around your home. Its divided into three zones for wildfire risk. Our staff will assess these zones and recommend improvements in a report sent directly to you. Homeowners need not be present for the assessment.



Chipping of Woody Material

Homeowners who complete a defensible space consultation are eligible to have woody material chipped. Piles including natural vegetation (limbs, small trees, brush all less than 6" in diameter) will be chipped during the last two weeks of October.



Sign up by scanning this with your smartphone
Or by contacting Wendy at the Kittitas County Conservation District at
509-925-3352 ext. 4 or wendy-mee@conservewa.net



Funding and support provided by:



KCCD Awarded Grant to Assist Thorp School District with "Farm to School" Initiative

Earlier this year, KCCD partnered with the Thorp School District to successfully apply for a National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Urban Agriculture grant. This was one of 21 grants awarded to conservation districts across the Country in 2020.

The Thorp School District is beginning to implement their "Farm to School" initiative converting a 2-acre site into production agricultural and a greenhouse. Thorp taxpayers passed a Capital Projects Levy and the school secured a Healthy Kids-Healthy Schools Grant to fund the needed infrastructure by remodeling the shop and computer lab, building a greenhouse, and remodeling a kitchen. The school has established a General Advisory Committee made up of a wide array of groups and individuals committed to helping this initiative succeed.

Through the NACD grant, KCCD will provide

technical assistance around the establishment of the 0.5-acre crop production area and the treatment of the remainder of the site to include addressing soil health and habitat (wildlife and pollinator). KCCD will also be documenting the process with the assistance of a video production company in order to share the process with other schools in the County. Stay tuned for progress reports on the KCCD Facebook page.

The NACD Urban Agriculture Conservation (UAC) program is designed to enhance districts' urban agriculture conservation technical assistance activities in developed and developing areas of both urban and rural communities. The Urban Agriculture Conservation Grant Initiative helps advance conservation in developed or developing areas. To date, NACD and NRCS have awarded \$5 million to 102 conservation districts.



Andrew Perkins (Thorp School Superintendent), Wendy Mee (KCCD) and Jared Fudacz (Thorp School) plan the pollinator garden.



The nursery (aka greenhouse) structure is underway now and will be completed this fall.

Voluntary Stewardship Program

The Kittitas County Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) is led by the Kittitas County Conservation District (KCCD) and is a voluntary approach supporting both agriculture and natural resources. The purpose of the VSP is to “promote plans to protect and enhance critical areas within the area where agricultural activities are conducted, while maintaining and improving the long term viability of agriculture” (RCW 36.70A.700(2)(a)). Agricultural practices are broadly defined and are not limited by size of the agricultural operations. Critical areas are those defined in statute to include fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, wetlands, frequently flooded areas, geologically hazardous areas, and critical aquifer recharge areas. KCCD facilitates a local Watershed Group who completed a Work Plan that was approved by the Washington State Conservation Commission in 2018. The plan is in the implementation phase now. The five-year progress report is due in November 2020.

All private landowners who conduct agricultural practices on their property are strongly encouraged to learn more about the five critical areas and whether they are present where agricultural practices are occurring. KCCD now has an on-line interactive map (<https://kittitascountyvsp.mapseed.org>) that landowners may use to review critical areas relative to their property. It also includes a survey where landowners may report stewardship practices

The screenshot shows the website interface for the Kittitas County Voluntary Stewardship Program. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Kittitas County VOLUNTARY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM' and 'ABOUT'. A prominent blue button says 'SHARE YOUR STEWARDSHIP'. Below this is a large map of the watershed area, showing various geographical features like wilderness areas (e.g., Henry M. Jackson, Wild Sky, Middle Fork Snoqualmie), national forests (e.g., Mount Baker-Snoqualmie, Teanaway Community), and state forests (e.g., Nantelum Ridge, Colocum Wildlife). A blue line traces the watershed boundary. To the right of the map, there's a 'Welcome Kittitas County Voluntary Stewards!' message with a 'GET STARTED' button. Below the map, there's a text block explaining the VSP and its purpose, followed by another 'GET STARTED' button. At the bottom right, a box contains the text: 'This map is available at: <https://kittitascountyvsp.mapseed.org>'.

they've implemented (whether they are funded through state and federal programs or self-funded). Any stewardship practices shared by a landowner will only be reported together with all other reported data at the watershed level. Data collected by the KCCD is generally exempt from the Public Records Act and privacy of individual landowners will be maintained. If landowners prefer, KCCD staff can complete a more detailed VSP inventory that includes a summary of all critical areas, suggestions of stewardship practices to implement and

documenting practices already implemented that can count toward the Work Plan goals. Interested landowners may contact Brent Dixon at the KCCD office - 925-3352 ext. 203 or brent-dixon@conservewa.net to request a VSP inventory.

Anyone interested in learning more about participating in the VSP can contact the KCCD at 925-3352 or by visiting <https://www.kccd.net/kittitas-county-watershed-group>.

What's next?

This winter KCCD will be updating our Long-Range Plan. This is a plan every conservation district in the state completes per RCW 89.08. The long-range plan together with the supplemental annual work plans, developed by each district has official status as the authorized program of each. The plan identifies natural resource concerns and es-

tablishes priorities for the next 5 years. KCCD's current long-range plan can be viewed here: <https://www.kccd.net/district-documents>

Anyone interested in participating the long-range plan update is encourage to contact Anna Lael, District Manager to learn more about the process and the timeline.

She can be reached at:
 925-3352 ext. 207
a-lael@conservewa.net

The image shows the cover of the '5-Year Plan (2017 to 2021) Kittitas County Conservation District'. It includes the KCCD logo and contact information for Anna Lael. Below the title, there's a section for 'Organization of the Kittitas County Conservation District' and a list of bullet points detailing the district's mission, vision, and values. At the bottom, there's a 'Natural Resource Data & Information' section with a table showing land types and their percentages.

Type	Acres	Percent of Total
Range and Non Impacted	486,734	33.9%
Impacted Cropland	138,886	9.3%
Forestland	828,261	55.5%