

WATERSHED WISE

MASON CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SUMMER 2013



Photo by Straight Light Studio, Fletcher Ward

SMALL FARMS PROGRAM WORKSHOP

On June 16th, WSU Extension and Mason Conservation District's Small Farms Program collaborated with the Pacific Northwest Salmon Center on organizing and hosting a Draft Animal Power Workshop at the Salmon Center's Farm at Water's Edge. John Erskin, long time draft power farmer and draft power advocate from Sequim and Betsey Wittick of Laughing Crow Farm on Bainbridge Island, presented the art and technique of cultivation with a team of horses while breaking new ground for increasing the farms vegetable production. The workshop was a huge success with over 40 farmers from Mason and surrounding counties learning what it takes to incorporate draft livestock into their farming operation and how to better manage their soils for long term sustainability. The two horse team led by Betsey and farm interns were able to demonstrate the power of these animals and turn over just under an acre of fresh ground in an afternoon, now ready to plant this year's late season vegetable crops.

One of the main highlights of the event was a very high interest in seeking out mentors, experienced draft animal operators and old draft equipment. The Small Farms' program is seeking those interested in learning, teaching, sharing, selling or just plain showing off their skills and equipment. If you or someone you know, has the background or equipment covered in dust in the barn, let us know! Let's keep this age old tradition alive and well in our region!

CONSERVATION CORNER

The Mason Conservation District is honored to announce two recipients of the 2012 Conservation Steward Award. The recipients of this award are selected based on their demonstrated use of conservation practices which may include marine and freshwater restoration projects, farm management and/or wildlife habitat enhancement.

The first recipients are Larry and Suzanne Boltz who own Valley View Farm. The Boltzes have a 70 acre farm where they raise pasture-fed beef near Phillips Lake in the Oakland Bay watershed. They installed gutters, downspouts and underground outlets to direct clean rain water away from livestock areas. The Boltzes built a manure storage structure to hold waste during the wet season so that it can be applied as organic fertilizer during the growing season. They also installed 4,000 feet of cross-fencing, which helps them to rotate the animals between fresh, lush pastures.

The Boltzes made many improvements to their property to protect water quality and promote conservation. They continuously work to make the farm efficient and ecologically sound.

The second recipient of the Conservation Steward Award is PUD #3. The PUD's John's Prairie Operations Center is located on 30 acres of land sandwiched between John's Prairie Road and John's Creek, just outside of Shelton. The facilities are designed to LEED Gold certification standards as developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. "LEED" stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. PUD #3 also embraced a number of "Low Impact Development" (LID) techniques on the site.

Mason Conservation District worked closely with the PUD over the last several years to develop a restoration and conservation landscaping plan for the property. The PUD planted over 22,000 plants to enhance the site and created large rain gardens to collect stormwater runoff.

PUD #3 implemented many Best Management Practices that reduce water consumption, treat stormwater runoff and promote energy efficiency and conservation.

UPCOMING CULTIVATING SUCCESS COURSE

The Small Farms Program, along with Lucas Patzek from WSU Extension Thurston, is pleased to announce the Fall 2013 Cultivating Success Course for Mason and Thurston County farmers. The Sustainable Small Farm & Ranch Overview Course is a 13-week program that will give students a broad overview of production and marketing options on today's small farm.

The course is available to established farmers seeking to sustain their existing operations as well as beginning farmers and ranchers looking to develop their understanding of sustainable agriculture. Course presenters include successful local producers and university specialists with expertise in direct marketing, value-added processing, production planning, and more. Participants will have a chance to participate in farm tours and field visits to see different operations and processing options up close.

The class will meet weekly from mid-September through November, although the exact dates/times of the program are still to be determined. The cost for taking the course is to be determined and is a set rate per farm or family where all can participate. Several scholarships will be available, so contact us ASAP for details.

For more information, contact Erik Hagan at erik.hagan@wsu.edu or (360) 427-9436 ext. 117 or visit the Cultivating Success website: www.cultivatinguccess.org

NEW RENTAL EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE

Poultry Processing Equipment

The Mason Conservation District is excited to announce new additions to our Poultry Processing Equipment Rental Program. MCD received a grant to increase our capacity to serve our poultry producers by adding two new and improved scalding units, a new rotating plucker, and two kill cone stand units for holding up to 8 kill cones at a time. MCD now has two complete units available for rent to minimize schedule conflicts and help poultry producers be more efficient.

Exciting new improvements have been made to the scalding unit saving time and energy by allowing more birds to be scalded at once. One unit contains a spring-loaded shackle dunker which allows up to eight birds to be scalded at a time with little effort. The shackle dunker can then be rotated directly into the plucker for hands free feather plucking. The other scalding unit utilizes a dual rotating basket system, each basket holding up to 3 broilers, and dunking them at the appropriate time intervals to prevent overheating. Check out the manufactures website for information on the new units (Featherman Equipment). As per our normal policy, priority will be given to Mason County farmers and farmers who will be processing for commercial sale, but only if there is a conflict on a specific date. Otherwise, it is first come first serve with an option for scalding system preference when available.



Manure Spreader

Got manure? The growing season is upon us and early fall is a prime time to spread all of that manure that you have been gathering and composting all year long. Pastures and hayfields require an input of nutrient rich material such as composted manure to maintain their productivity and resilience to drought as livestock and haying strip the soil of its green life giving nutrition over time. Spreading compost evenly and consistently when the rains clear and the grass is growing will maximize the uptake of nutrients while invigorating the life in the soil providing you proper manure management and greener fields for years to come. To assist with this practice, MCD recently acquired a Mill Creek Manure Spreader to add to the fleet of rental equipment available to area landowners. This ground-driven compact manure spreader holds about a yard of composted manure and can be pulled behind a small tractor, 18 hp riding lawnmower, 450cc ATV or utility vehicle. Rental rates are \$25 a day and the spreader is available only during the growing season when manure can be applied.



Weed Wrench and Soil Samples

Weed wrenches are available to borrow for free for all Mason County landowners to remove invasive weeds from their land. Our county is making great progress in removing these challenging species that are causing considerable environmental harm. Be a part of the solution while saving your back by checking out one of our fancy weed wrenches this summer! Contact one of our technicians to schedule a rental.

Be sure to check in about our soil sampling program to ensure your pastures, crop ground, or hayfields are at their best! Too much fertilizer can be a bad thing and a waste of money our technicians are able to provide you with assistance on the best management strategies. For those who would like to spread manure with our spreader but don't have manure to spread (or if you have too much manure for your fields) check out our Manure Exchange Program, connecting manure owners to manure users. Call us for more information.



LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO SALMON RECOVERY

For more than a decade, local organizations have partnered to improve habitat conditions for salmon in our watersheds. In southern Mason County, the effort is led by the Kennedy / Goldsborough Salmon Habitat Recovery Lead Entity, housed within the Mason Conservation District. This Lead Entity is comprised of scientists, citizens, fish and wildlife specialists, and representatives from all levels of government – local, state, tribal and federal, working to identify and implement local solutions that will help both people and salmon.

The Lead Entity has developed plans that target money and resources toward the most scientifically valid strategies to recover salmon and is collaborating with the people and organizations to carry out the work. The “Washington Way” is the state’s community driven, locally based approach to recover salmon that is led here in the community rather than in Washington DC. This unique approach brings salmon dollars home to businesses and workers right here in Mason County.

Salmon recovery projects generate significant economic benefit for our area. For example, NOAA has found that for every \$1 million invested in oil and gas projects, roughly five jobs are created; road infrastructure projects create seven jobs; and watershed restoration projects create 17 jobs. More labor intensive restoration projects can create as many as 33 jobs per \$1 million invested.

This July, the Lead Entity prioritized four projects totaling just over \$1 million dollars for our local economy and the salmon in our backyard. These projects will protect and restore 74 acres of salt marsh and estuary along the mouth of Johns Creek; place wood within the stream and plant native plants along the lower section of Johns Creek; remove an 800’

bulkhead along Eld Inlet to allow the sediment to feed beaches that sand lance and surf smelt spawn on – critical food sources for salmon; and determine the level of invasive knotweed infestation in the Mill and Goldsborough stream systems.

The process of allocating funds occurs annually and if you have an interest in salmon in the waters of Mason County, you can help. Please contact Amy Hatch-Winecka at (360) 427-9436 ext. 110 or amyhw@thurstoncd.com to find out how.



Lead Entity site visit to Midway Creek culvert replacement project.

LINDA GOTT RETIRING AS DISTRICT TREASURER

The Mason Conservation District would like to thank Linda Gott for her service as the District Treasurer. Linda has been the Treasurer since 2008 after retiring from Pioneer School District as their business manager. Linda will be greatly missed.

We would like to introduce Denise Velthuisen as the new District Treasurer. Denise comes to the District with ten years of experience in governmental accounting.



TREATING KNOTWEED IN THE SKOKOMISH WATERSHED

This summer the Mason Conservation District will continue riparian restoration efforts made possible by the Southern Hood Canal Riparian Enhancement Project (funded by the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office). The project involves knotweed inventory and treatment in the summer, and riparian planting in the winter. MCD is about to begin the fourth season of knotweed treatment in the Skokomish Valley.

With assistance from the Washington Conservation Corps, the District is continuing its survey of the Skokomish watershed and treating knotweed on many properties throughout the Skokomish Valley. Since river flows help facilitate the spread of knotweed, MCD has been working from the upstream extent of knotweed infestation towards the mouth of the river. Each year MCD is making more downstream progress. Last year knotweed control efforts extended approximately 0.7 miles downstream of the Skokomish Community Church. These efforts rely on landowner support. Landowners must sign a permission form allowing MCD to treat knotweed on their property. *Thus far, MCD has obtained 109 signed landowner permission forms resulting in treatment of more than 53 acres of knotweed.* While the project has been successfully controlling knotweed towards the top of the watershed, continued landowner support is essential to achieving the overall goal of controlling knotweed in the entire Skokomish Watershed. Join Us!

KNOCK OUT KNOTWEED!

MASON CONSERVATION DISTRICT KNOTWEED CONTROL PROJECT

What is knotweed?

- Bamboo-like broadleaf plant native to Asia
- Class B noxious weed in WA
- Bohemian knotweed (*P. bohemicum*) is a hybrid species and is the most common species found in the Western Washington

Why is knotweed a problem?

- Displaces native habitat
- Destroys fish and wildlife habitat
- Reduces recreational opportunities
- Can grow through concrete and foundations and cause property damage

How does knotweed grow and spread?

Rhizomes: spread 20 ft or more & up to 7 ft deep
Fragments as small as ½ inch can start new plants
Fragments spread by river systems, floods, mowers, beavers, etc.

How can I help?

Take advantage of free assistance. Please contact us:

- If you have questions about knotweed control
- If you have knotweed on your property and want assistance
- If you are unsure whether you have knotweed on your property



What does knotweed look like?

- Bamboo-like stem, hollow, green/reddish in color
- Leaves are heart shaped & arranged alternately on stem
- Goes dormant and looks dead in the winter
- Clusters of small white flowers in summer



How can knotweed be controlled?

The most effective method of control is applying herbicide, since knotweed is so deeply rooted and spreads so readily.

Please contact the Mason Conservation District or the Mason County Noxious Weed Board for assistance with herbicide application.

For Assistance or More Information Please Contact:

Evan Bauder
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evan@masoncd.org

OR

Brandee Gregory
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SMALL FARMS PROGRAM IS BACK!

Mason Conservation District and WSU Extension have reestablished the Small Farms Program in Mason County in order to increase food production and the practice of sustainable agriculture by offering education, community development and technical assistance. Following the excellent work initiated by Kirsten Workman, the program is now coordinated by Erik Hagan; farmer, food and farm system developer, and diversified farming system consultant. Erik has an extensive background in small scale fruit, vegetable and livestock production in the region and has helped area farmers diversify their production, on-farm income and conservation practices through ecological, integrative and Permaculture design techniques. His position as Overseer at the McLane Grange, representative on the Thurston County Agricultural Advisory Committee, co-founder of the West Olympia Farmers' Market, and educator focused on sustainable agricultural techniques provides Mason County with an advocate and technical assistance provider for a more resilient agricultural future. His expertise in integrating agricultural production with conservation efforts and community building programs is now available to all county producers and landowners.

Stay tuned in by turning your radio dial to KMAS 1030am or 104.1fm for monthly agriculture and conservation related news in Mason County presented by our Small Farms Program Coordinator, Erik Hagan.

Interested in staying connected and be the first to learn about our regions Agriculture and Conservation related workshops and news? Contact Erik Hagan at erik.hagan@wsu.edu to subscribe the Mason County Small Farms list-serve!

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