

# Walla Walla County Conservation District NEWSLETTER

Winter 2024  
Volume 30, Issue 3

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We would like to welcome Jake Mantela. He was recently hired as a Conservation Scientist at WWCCD. Jake has a broad background in botany, data collection, and geospatial disciplines. He studied Environmental Biology/Plant Biology at Michigan State University, and then moved west after graduating. Jake looks forward to making a positive, lasting impact in Walla Walla County.

Thank you to Cat Garza. Cat Garza has been with the District for several years as a Conservation Scientist. During that time, she contributed to the completion of several riparian restoration projects, maintained rainfall data for the county, and assisted in soil surveys and CRP checks with NRCS. We wish her a warm departure to her new job with the Walla Walla Watershed Basin Council in Milton-Freewater, OR.

We would like to say farewell to Eila Chin. Eila Chin has been with the District for 1.5 years as a Conservation Scientist. During that time, she contributed to the completion of several riparian restoration projects and assisted with our volunteer outreach events. We wish her a heartfelt farewell on her travels around the world.



## NRCS Staff Updates

Ryan Foley is a Natural Resource Specialist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). He works with farmers and private landowners of Walla Walla County to provide technical and financial assistance to help conserve their land through the implementation of conservation practices to improve soil and water. Ryan grew up on the west coast of Michigan. Ryan previously worked for Lapeer Conservation District in Michigan, where he started his career working with local producers to conserve our natural resources.

Trevor Shea is a Natural Resource Specialist for NRCS Walla Walla. Trevor will be working with producers to provide financial and technical assistance to help conserve their natural resources through various programs and practices. Trevor comes from Humboldt, CA where his interest in raccoons and the conservation of natural resources started.



# Dry Creek Bank Stabilization and Water Quality

The Conservation District partnered with the Department of Ecology, the Conservation Commission, and a local farmer to address an eroding bank on Dry Creek, which was causing concerns for water quality and potential impacts to the adjacent agricultural field.

Over the last several years, approximately 100 feet of the bank has been progressively eroding. During the flood in 2020, the stream was overbanked, causing additional damage and sending water across the adjacent ground. Working with the landowner, farmer, and partners at the Department of Fish and Wildlife, District staff could create a plan and apply for funding through the Department of Ecology and the Conservation Commission.

In September, a pile driver installed a series of natural logs vertically along the eroding section of the bank, and natural brush was packed in behind to provide additional protection. Over the next couple of months, we will plant willows and dogwood into the structure and along the water's edge, as well as native trees and shrubs at the top of the bank on both sides.



**Prior to installation**



**After installation**

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## Riparian Grant Program

The riparian team has been busy planting over 10,000 plants on 128 acres this fall! Funding came through the Conservation Commission's Riparian Grant Program to address riparian areas and water quality on Garrison, Yellowhawk, Lassiter, and Caldwell Creeks, as well as a spring-fed pond supplying water to Yellowhawk. Multiple private landowners have benefited from these projects in addition to two of our middle schools and property belonging to the City of Walla Walla and Walla Walla County. Various local contractors have done some of the work, but we also partnered with the Washington Conservation Corps to do much of the planting and grub out a whole lot of blackberries. They are great to work with and always willing to tackle big tasks, even when the weather is cold and dreary!



**Native plants with cages to minimize predation to plants**



**Conservation Technician Eila Chin planting native species.**





## A WATER AND WINE EVENT

*Uncorking the secrets of the Walla Walla watershed*

You're invited to wade into a night of engaging conversations about the critical role the aquifer plays in water availability in the Walla Walla watershed.

Join Frank Nicholson, City of Walla Walla Utility Engineer, as he explores aquifer storage and recovery and the geology of the area basalt aquifer.



**Date:** January 8, 2025

**Time:** Doors open at 5:00 p.m.

Presentation starts at 5:30 p.m.

**Location:** Rotie Cellars, 84328 Trumbull Ln,  
Milton Freewater, OR 97862

**RESERVE YOUR SPOT NOW!**

<https://bit.ly/3TmBk6u>



This Water and Wine talk series is part of the Walla Walla Watershed Strategy – a collaborative effort to improve streamflows, water supplies and watershed health in the Walla Walla River Basin for today, tomorrow and beyond.

For more details, visit [wallawallawater.org](http://wallawallawater.org)

\*Beverages will be available for purchase at the establishment.



## Growing Minds-Outdoor Education

Our Education and Outreach Coordinator, Alison Crowley, has been working with the Dixie Elementary School and partnering with Pheasants Forever, the Blue Mountain Chapter, and The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the Mill Creek Project / Bennington Dam. The students have been learning about native and invasive plants in the classroom, then took their lessons outdoors, where they planted 300 native species within the Mill Creek Complex. Students will revisit these plants during Spring 2025 to evaluate the success of the planting.



## Annual Meeting

**Event Overview:** Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2025 at 8 A.M Walla Walla Community College Water & Environmental Center

### Updates:

**Conservation Partner Updates (8:30 AM)** from various organizations:

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Walla Walla County Noxious Weed Control Board

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)

WSU Extension

### Speaking Sessions:

**Producer Panel on Soil Health in Walla Walla County-** Matt Williams, moderator; – Discussion of soil health as it relates to pesticide management

**HB4 and the State of Grain Production in Washington State-** With the Washington Grain Commission

**Pesticides and Water Quality in Washington State”** -Briana Rhode (WSDA Environmental Specialist) & Emily Oberhoffer (WSDA Hydrogeologist)

**BMP's Associated with Agricultural Burning-** Daniel Matsche & Paul Rossow (Dept of Ecology Air Quality Program)

**Hosted Lunch:** 12:15 PM



## WWCCDBoardMember Recruitment

The Walla Walla County Conservation District Board of Supervisors is comprised of 5 supervisors: 3 elected and two appointed. They provide high-level oversight and guidance on CD activities. We will hold an election on January 21, 2025, for an elected position. Applications for the appointed position will need to be received by March. Interested candidates are welcome to attend board meetings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month, starting at 4 pm or 5 pm, depending on daylight savings time. Contact [renee.hadley@wwccd.net](mailto:renee.hadley@wwccd.net) or 509-956-3756 for details.



### Walla Walla County Conservation District

#### District Staff

Renee Hadley, District Manager  
Jenny Freer, Fiscal Specialist  
Joanna Cowles Cleveland, CREP Scientist  
Annie Byerley, Conservation Scientist  
Grant Traynor, VSP Program Coordinator  
Alison Crowley, Education and Outreach Coordinator  
Jake Mantela, Conservation Scientist

#### Board of Supervisors

Jesse McCaw  
Jim Kent  
Jeff Schulke  
Don Schwerin

[www.wwccd.net](http://www.wwccd.net)

### Our USDA SERVICE CENTER partners

#### NRCS Staff

Tracy Hanger, District Conservationist Snake River Team  
Bryce Krueger, WW area Resource Conservationist  
Katy Martin, Snake River Team Program Support  
Ryan Foley, Natural Resource Specialist  
Trevor Shea, Natural Resource Specialist

#### FSA Staff

Kelley Betts, County Executive Director for WW & Columbia  
Norma Colunga, Program Analyst  
Stephanie Kaping, Program Analyst  
Brooke Barich, Program Analyst  
Samantha Castoldi, Program Analyst

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