CONSERVATION CONNECTION

Fall 2018

Mark Your Calendar

- **VSP —State Technical Committee to vote on final plan, October 26**
- **Conservation District Board of Supervisors Meeting on Wednesday, December 12.**
- **2019 Spring Plant Sale flyer in the mail around January 1, 2019**
- **2019 Spring Plant Sale Pickup, Thursday, April 12 and Friday, April 13, 2019**
- **2019 Spring Conservation Fair, April 13, 2019**

Inside this issue:

Ferry Conservation District

Our mission is to safeguard the rural lifestyle and sustainable use of natural resources of Ferry County for present and future landowners, residents, and visitors by offering technical and financial assistance, outreach, and education through partnerships.

The Black Cottonwood: Mainstay of a Healthy Riparian Zone

Cottonwoods line the banks of the Kettle River

Found in great numbers up and down the banks of the Kettle and Sanpoil Rivers (and their tributaries) is a tall, rough-barked, deciduous tree. This tree, the black cottonwood (Populus trichocarpa), is a close relative of the quaking aspen.

One of several North American cottonwoods, it is found from Alaska to Mexico and from the Pacific coast inland to Montana. The tree is well known for its resinous, sweet-smelling buds, its fuzzy fruit and cottony white (hence the name) seed-bearing fluff, which blows down from the tree in the spring wind like snow.

The cottonwood is the fastest growing tree in North America, reaching a height of 100+ feet and a diameter of 3 feet or more. Preferring wet sites, it is often found along the banks of lakes and streams, and in wet lowlands and swamps. A pioneer species, it is shade intolerant and will establish itself on an open disturbed site such as a sandbar or an eroded bank. With its very aggressive root system, it provides stability for stream banks, helping minimize the damaging effects of floods, while at the same time quickly stabilizing a flood-disturbed site.

In this way, the black cottonwood plays a very important role in the riparian zone, the natural feature creating a transition between a stream or lake and the drier upland. A healthy riparian zone is essential to the health of an aquatic system.

How does the riparian zone work? Elevated groundwater and nutrient-rich silt deposits from periodic floodwaters make the riparian zone a very good medium for the growth of grasses, woody shrubs and small and large trees (such as the cottonwood). The roots of these plants anchor the banks, protecting them from eroding under the strong influence of annual high water and periodic large floods. With reduced erosion, the stream water stays clearer. Occasionally a super flood will erode banks and even carve a new riverbed, but eventually, equilibrium will be reached again, with high water depositing nutrients and the resultant healthy plant growth (including, again, the fast-growing cottonwood) holding the banks in place.

(***Cottonwood and riparian areas—cont. on page 3)***

We're Gearing up for 2019 Plant Sale!

We have already reserved a number of edibles, native shrubs and native trees (including reforestation trees) for the 2019 sale. We will again have two varieties of grapes, as well as apples, plums, pears, strawberries and gold raspberries. We will also be offering crimson cherry rhubarb and, for the first time, horseradish root and haskap berry (honeyberry) plants! Look for our flyer in the mail around January 1 and on our website before that. Plant pick-up dates are Friday April 12 and Saturday, April 13.

Conservation District Partners with School Districts on Roberta Greenhouse Project

Just over two years ago, Dr. John Glenewinkel, Superintendent of Republic and Curlew School Districts, wrote and was awarded a grant to establish greenhouses for the two schools. With funds from this grant, small greenhouses have been successfully operating at both schools for the past two years, supporting horticultural and agricultural curriculum in the middle and high school science classes. Plants have been grown to supply some food for the school cafeterias and composting programs have been in place at both schools to recycle the cafeteria food waste back into the greenhouse soil.

Ferry PUD planted poles to bring power to the greenhouse

The grant also provided funding to purchase and erect a larger greenhouse, to be placed at a location between the two schools. The proposal called for this commercial-sized greenhouse to be used by the schools to expand their Career and Technical Education classes, as related to agriculture.

"The (Roberta greenhouse) project has been a very successful partnership between the Conservation District and the Republic and Curlew School Districts."

Glenewinkel approached the Ferry Conservation District (FCD) with a proposal to lease a corner of the FCD's Herron Creek Property, near Roberta Lake, as a site for the large greenhouse. The FCD agreed and acquired an additional grant from the Washington State Conservation Commission to assist in the development of the access road, a water supply system and preparation of a building site. In late spring of 2018, Stotts Construction donated equipment and labor for the construction of a road from Highway 21 and for preparation of the building site. During the summer, a team of high school students, under the supervision of Curlew School teacher, Dave Devoe, constructed the greenhouse.

Greenhouse construction crew hard at work.

The FCD's Bill Chamberlin observed that "The students did an outstanding job. They were very proud of their work!"

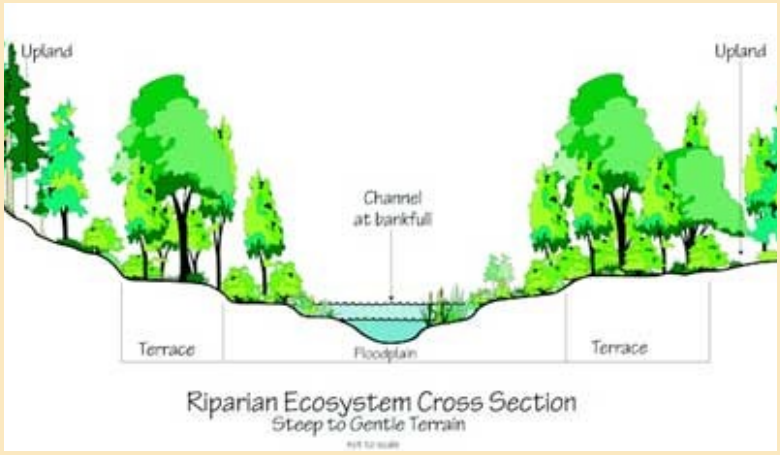
With the construction of the building wrapped up before school started, various other parts of the project have taken place or are now underway. Stotts has completed the road, placing multiple loads of shale on the roadway. Ferry PUD has brought lines from the highway to provide power for the project. Fogle Pump has drilled a well to provide water and will install a pumping and water delivery system to the building. Richard Wilkie, of Kane Realboy Electric, has provided the electrical contracting services for the project. Northern Energy from Kettle Falls, with help from Curlew School Industrial Arts students will install a propane tank and line to the building. Stewart and Kathleen Luce, of K's Creek, LLC, will then build a security fence around the building.

Fogle Pump drilled the well to supply greenhouse with water.

Glenewinkel is very happy with the progress of this project. As he sees all the pieces come together, he and his teachers are getting ready to put the building to use very soon. The project has been a very successful partnership between the Conservation District and the Republic and Curlew School Districts.

Cottonwoods and Riparian Areas (cont. from pg. 1)

The cottonwood, along with other riparian plants, provides important habitat for many animals. In the summer, this deciduous tree shades shorelines and waterways, providing cover for animals, while keeping the water temperature cooler and improving the aquatic habitat. The tree's leaves provide nutrients for aquatic invertebrates which become sustenance for a variety of fish species. Dead trees are a home for insects which, in turn, are a food source for many birds, especially several species of woodpeckers. When they can no longer stand, the dead trees and branches eventually fall into the stream, slowing the current (reducing bank erosion) and providing habitat (pools and protection) for fish and other animals. The riparian area, with its rich vegetation, also provides excellent habitat for many terrestrial mammals.



A healthy riparian ecosystem provides many benefits. (graphic courtesy US Forest Service)

Not only do the stable stream banks contribute less sediment to the stream, but a healthy riparian zone filters nutrients and other pollutants out of the runoff from adjacent uplands. This improves fisheries, swimming, public water supplies, and general aesthetic value of property. Reduced flow during high water also correlates to less property damage.

"...a healthy riparian zone...improves fisheries, swimming, public water supplies and the general aesthetic value of property"

As the importance of these riparian buffers is more appreciated, increased efforts are being made to restore those that have been lost to development.

Planting cottonwood trees is a step towards this goal. To that end, The FCD will be offering black cottonwood cuttings at its 2019 Spring Plant Sale. For landowners desiring to plant cottonwood trees to restore riparian areas or simply to enhance their property (cottonwood is not drought-tolerant, so it must be planted near water or where subsurface water is available), look for the FCD Plant Sale flyer in your mailbox around January 1 or visit the FCD website (www.ferrycd.org) for information.

The "cotton" of a cottonwood serves as the tree's seed dispersal mechanism.

Presently, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for its Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) grants, which provide cost-share funds for selected conservation projects, including riparian work. To apply for the EQIP program, call Patrice Beckwith at (509)775-3473, ext. 102.

The Ferry Conservation District (FCD) has recently wrapped up a two-year Water Quality in Ferry County (WQFC) Grant (WA State Department of Ecology) project, which included riparian restoration projects on Ferry County stream banks. The FCD

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Conserving Natural Resources Since 1947

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation or improved or create wildlife habitat.

The deadline for fiscal year 2019 EQIP funding is November 2, 2018.

Each applicant must establish themselves as a USDA customer and complete all Farm Service Agency (FSA) eligibility requirements *prior* to the application cut-off date.

For additional information contact Patrice Beckwith at 509-775-3473 x102.

Box Holder

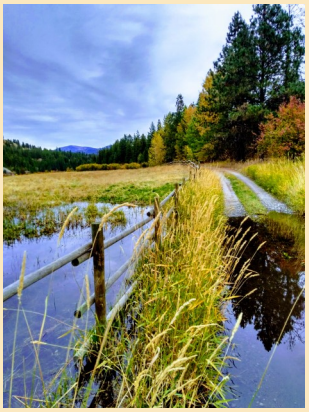
Republic, WA 99166

The Ferry County Voluntary Stewardship (VSP) Work Group has completed the VSP Final Draft Work Plan and has submitted it to the State Technical Committee for final approval (Technical Committee to vote October 26).

The plan is available online for review (For more info and a link to the plan click here.)

We're on the Web. Visit us at:

http://www.ferrycd.org



Fall Colors in Ferry County

Ferry Conservation District is a non-regulatory agency. Our services are available to all without discrimination.