Snohomish Conservation District
528 - 91st Ave NE
Lake Stevens, WA 98258

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lake Stevens, WA
Permit No. 26

SNOHOMISH
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
The NEXUS

One Winning Combination

by Lois Ruskell, SCD Outreach Coordinator

Lyn and her youngest resident

Women, horses and dogs seem to go together like bacon, lettuce and tomato. That combination of human and animal, on rural acreages, has long been in residence here in Snohomish County.

One thing we haven't seen as much of, until recently, is single women who purchase acreage, create the infrastructure for a small farm, and populate it with the animals they remember from their youth. Generally, they don't have the resources to 1) buy a farm, and 2) to handle land clearing and maintenance, barn building, weed control, road maintenance, well repairs, and all other factors that come with farm ownership.

Lyn Gross is one exception, and one exceptional lady. She not only bought five acres with only a house on it, she cleared stumps to create pastures, developed an extensive underground drainage system to prevent mud, built a well laid-out barn, landscaped her property, and created a system to manage animal waste routinely. Lyn is currently building a large covered arena so she and her one boarder have a dry space to work with the eight horses currently in residence.

What impressed me the most when Bobbi Lindemulder, our lead small farm planner, and I visited Lyn's Seven Lakes-area farm south of Stanwood this Spring was when Lyn happily said, "We never have mud. There is no time of the year that we have mud on this property." She admits that it took her about five years to "get that mastered", but Lyn is glad she did her research early on.

Lyn's farm is as clean and neat as her barn and yard.

Right away, after purchasing what I would call a 'stump farm', Lyn found out about the Snohomish Conservation District and took advantage of the free technical advice and how-to workshops. She has since been to several of our classes, attended a nearby farm tour, and makes use of our fact sheets. She admits that she doesn't have the time to go to lots of farm tours, and instead likes to study Conservation District publications and information from other sources.

Hmmm, eight horses on five acres would seem like a lot. However, the Gross farm looks like a park. Neatly manicured lawns are edged (edged!) along ponds that help handle excess rainwater. The driveway is graveled, and lined with rhododendrons and trees. Rain from the house roof drains to a rock pad and then to a grass swale along the driveway. This helps water the fruit trees and rhododendrons along the drive.

The farm's pastures are divided by cross fencing and horses are only allowed to graze for a limited period of time. A sacrifice area was created behind the barn which the horses use when pastures are too wet in the winter. The new barn includes gutters, but downspouts, too easily damaged by animals, were replaced with concrete above-ground catch basins (shown below) that funnel roof water to the extensive underground drainage system.

Lyn, an emergency management professional, spent about a year getting ready for horses before she brought her first one in. She purchases PMU foals from a company in Canada. (Pregnant Mare Urine or PMU foals are the product of mares whose urine is used for hormones in the pharmaceutical industry.)

These catch-basins replaced downspouts on the barn.

Lyn has switched her horses to pelleted bedding in the barn, which she credits with reducing her manure maintenance issues. She has two covered manure bins along the driveway - close to the barn. There is another, larger covered pile in a back pasture which is turned frequently. Any excess compost that Lyn doesn't use on the farm is given to one of the people who assist her on occasion.

Lyn makes sure to lime her pastures in the Fall, and fertilize every Spring. She also irrigates her pastures using a fire hose from the barn when needed. About her only complaint now is that she still has to fight buttercups, otherwise, the pastures are in good shape.

Lyn has worked with Bobbi since she moved in eight years ago. According to Lyn, "I really appreciate all the help and advice I got from the Conservation District."

Credit should also be given to Lyn's parents, who live on the property, and who can be seen running around with yard tools, helping Lyn keep that 'manicured look'. Lyn credits her Mom and Dad for her beautiful yard.

Snohomish Conservation District will be hosting a class in the Fall on "Picking the Right Property". The class will be held on Saturday, September 29th, at Cedarhome Elementary in Stanwood. See Page 4 for details.

Summer 2007
Serving Snohomish County and Camano Island

News from You

Have you adopted a new farm enterprise, or significantly changed your farming operation because of a class or tour that you participated in through the Conservation District? If you have, we'd like to hear about it.

We sometimes see articles about folks who have gone into a livestock or crop enterprise because of one our speakers, but we'd like to know more. You can email any stories you have to workshops@snohomishcd.org. Before and after photos would be great too. We'd love to hear from you!

Assessment Efforts

And so it continues...the Conservation District is in the process of seeking a fee assessment to fund our services. Perhaps you are not aware that we recently held two public meetings to present the proposal and ask for public input. Attendance was sadly small, however, we were inadvertently competing with the finales of two TV shows, one with a local connection. And maybe $5 isn't enough to draw people out in the evening. What's next? SCD will be meeting with city officials and other groups. Check our website for news. Direct comments to supervisors@snohomishcd.org.

Inside

- Tansy is Trouble
- Dealing with Pet Waste
- Upgrade Farm Methods
- Grant Has Urban Focus
- Loans for Ag Producers
- Restorationist Begins
- Ag Plastics Update

"In summer, the song sings itself"
William Carlos Williams

The Scourge of Summer - Tansy

Taken from the King County Metro website: www.metrokc.gov

History and Impact

An invader from Europe, tansy ragwort was first seen in seaports in the early 1900's and is often spread in contaminated hay. When prevalent, tansy ragwort is one of the most common causes of poisoning in cattle and horses, caused by consumption of the weed found in pasture, hay or silage. Milk produced by affected cows and goats can contain toxins. Livestock do not avoid it in hay or silage and its poisonous alkaloids are unaffected by drying. Honey from tansy ragwort can also contain the poisonous alkaloids.

Biology and Morphology

The plant's stem is stout, erect or slightly spreading, and may be branched; often groups of stems arise from the plant crown. A biennial plant, tansy ragwort usually germinates in fall or early winter, lives through the next year as a rosette, then dies the following year after producing flowers and seeds. Its leaves are dark green on top, whitish-green underneath, and have deeply cut, blunt-toothed lobes with a ragged/ruffled appearance. Flower clusters develop on stout, leafy elongated stems that grow up to 6 feet tall.

Each flower has many bright yellow flowers with (usually) 13 petals. Its seeds are wind-carried, resulting in rapid spread of tansy ragwort infestations. A single large plant may produce 150,000 seeds which can lie dormant in the soil for as long as 15 years. The plant's fibrous root system spreads from the crown and produces small adventitious shoots when stimulated by mechanical destruction or pulling.

Symptoms of Ragwort Poisoning

Most cases of poisoning happen in Spring before other forage is available for animals to graze. Also, poisoning can happen in overgrazed pastures and where it is mixed in hay or silage. Watch for these symptoms:

- **Prostration**
- **Loss of appetite**
- **Aggression**
- **Aimless wandering**
- **Dry muzzle**
- **Nervousness (especially with horses)**
- **Discharges from eyes and nose**
- **Yellowish mucous membranes**
- **Depression**
- **Weakness**

Tansy is poisonous to cattle, horses, sheep, pets and people. Deer, pigs and goats may also be affected. The most toxic part of the plant is the leaves. It is a Class B undesignated noxious weed (meaning that control is required by Snohomish County). For information on tansy ragwort identification and control, please contact Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board or the Snohomish County Noxious Weed Coordinator, Sonny Gohrman.

Sonny Gohrman
1136 Ave. D
Snohomish, WA 98290
(360) 862-7523

WA State Noxious Weed Control Board
1111 Washington St.
PO Box 42560
Olympia, WA 98504-2560
(360) 902-2053

Find out more about controlling tansy at our Wednesday, June 27 workshop at the Horseshoe Grange in Clearview from 6 to 9 PM. See page 4 for details on registering.

Pet Pollution….It Happens

by Eric Schuh, SCD Farm Planner

Are you like so many Snohomish County residents who own a dog, cat or other pet? If you do, hopefully you are managing the wastes that they produce. However, perhaps you've seen pet waste left on a sidewalk or decaying in parks and yards. It's a common problem. Everyone needs to actively keep pet waste from polluting streams or lakes and creating health problems.

When it rains, water flows from rooftops, over paved areas, through lawns and yards, downhill to low spots, where storm sewers are typically located. This rainwater (called stormwater runoff) collects and transports potential pollutants as it moves, including pet waste, chemical residues, metals, and other harmful things.

Contrary to popular belief, storm sewers do not carry this runoff to sewage treatment plants. Instead, most storm sewers empty directly into local lakes, streams, and wetlands, or into Puget Sound, whichever is closer. During heavy rainstorms, animal waste from pets, livestock, and wildlife can be a significant source of pollution in Snohomish County streams, lakes, and ground water.

Although animal waste is not always a problem, large quantities of it—left untreated or disposed of improperly—can be harmful. Animal fecal contains nutrients that make algae grow in lakes and ponds. Algae take up most of the oxygen in the water as it's growing. This makes it very difficult for fish and other aquatic creatures to breathe and survive. Pet wastes are also known to carry disease-causing organisms that can make water unsafe for swimming, fishing, and drinking.

How Many Dogs and Cats are There?

There is no official pet census, and many people don't license their dogs or cats, so no hard numbers exist on Snohomish County's overall dog or cat population. However, we can make a fairly accurate estimate of the number of pets people keep.

For dogs, research conducted by the American Veterinary Medical Association reports that 37 percent of Washington State households own dogs, with an average of 1.5 dogs per household. In 2005, the US Census Bureau reported there were 252,417 households in Snohomish County. This means there could be approximately 141,500 dogs living in Snohomish County.

How Much Waste is This?

Dogs excrete on average 0.33 pounds of waste daily (not including urine). So, the estimated amount of dog waste in Snohomish County could be more than 46,000 pounds. That's more than 20 tons dropped in our backyards, sidewalks, and parks EVERY DAY!

What Can You Do?

Pet waste is most likely not the most toxic thing in our urban waters, but it is a constant factor contributing to polluted lakes, streams, and Puget Sound. Fortunately, there are easy steps you, as a pet owner, can take to help reduce pollution.

1.) Always pick up your pet's waste - this is basic hygene and common courtesy.

2.) Dispose of pet wastes properly. Here's how:

Collecting it – Collecting it in a plastic bag and placing it in a garbage receptacle is currently the recommended practice. You can collect pet waste in a plastic bag, seal it securely, and dispose of it in your trash can, assuming your local waste management company allows this practice. Make sure to always wash hands after handling pet waste.

Burying/Composting Pet Waste – this is no longer recommended and actually discouraged here in Snohomish County. Composting or burying your pet's waste **does not** reliably kill the hazardous organisms. 'Doggie digesters' don't work well here either.

Flushing down the toilet – **Do not** do this if you are on a septic system. If you are on a city sewer system, this can be a good way to dispose of the wastes (not the litter though).

The Snohomish County website (http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/) has lots of good information on pet waste. For instance, they report that Roundworms, E. coli, and Giardia are just a few of the many harmful microorganisms that can be transmitted from pet waste to humans. Some can last in your yard for as long as four years if not cleaned up. Children who play outside and adults who garden are at greatest risk of infection.

Remember, pet waste is sewage, so what's best for you and your family, your neighborhood, and the environment is to love your pets and clean up after them routinely. It's up to all of us!

Seven puppies can go through lots of newspaper!

Picking the Right Practices for Your Farm

by Amanda Ruzicka, SCD Farm Planner

If you own a small farm, it has probably come to your attention that without on-going maintenance, your farm could have a negative effect on the surrounding environment. Many small farm owners have taken a welcoming step towards helping local streams and lakes stay clean, reducing their chore time and having an aesthetically-pleasing farm by using Best Management Practices on their property.

Best Management Practices (also known as BMP's) are effective, practical methods of farming that can prevent or reduce the amount of pesticides, petroleum products, sediments, animal wastes and bacteria that enter our streams and lakes. When applied and maintained properly, these practices help keep these waters clean and keep your farm healthy for your family and your animals.

The beauty of these practices is that they are flexible enough to easily adjust to your situation, and there are a wide variety of practices to choose from. While there may be more than one source of pollution on your farm that needs to be addressed, there may also be more than one management practice to correct or control it. Snohomish Conservation District planners can help you select practices that are economical and practical while maintaining water quality and helping to preserve the productivity of your farm.

The type of pollution likely to come from farms and rural acreages is called 'non point pollution'. It has no single identifiable source. While the amount from a particular farm or property may be small, when combined with non point pollution from other areas in a watershed, the accumulated toxins can create a water quality problem. To lesson your impact on our rural landscape, the Conservation District offers free help, free farm visits, a wealth of publications, and oftentimes, funding for certain practices. Planners can help you with:

- Managing your mud
- Managing all that manure (storage and application)
- Managing your pastures (identification of soils and weeds, renovation tips and grazing advice)
- Managing water from roofs and slabs (gutters, downspouts and outlets)
- Setting up a fencing system
- Establishing/repairing stream crossings

By adopting these practices, you are actively helping:

- Maintain the integrity of streams
- Reduce the volume of rain leaving your farm
- Minimize the movement of pesticides, nutrients, petroleum products, and sediments to local streams, creeks and wetlands
- Stabilize exposed soils and streambanks
- Preserve essential feeding, nesting, rearing, and hiding areas for fish and wildlife
- Create safe travel corridors for wildlife

To schedule a free farm visit with Amanda or one of our other planners, call 425-335-5634, ext 4.

Summer on the Farm

Join Amanda, Peter Moon, and Dick Barr on Tuesday, June 26th at Loyal Heights Community Hall near Bryant Corner from 6 PM to 9 PM for a free workshop 'Summer on the Farm'. Get information on composting; growing, harvesting and selling hay; and selecting the right practices for your farm and your lifestyle.

***Above** - Manure that is not covered and contained means potentially toxic liquids leaching out and into any nearby surface or ground water. **Below** - A recently completed compost bin made with ecology blocks.*

***Above** - A state-of-the-art compost system that uses forced air to more quickly reduce the volume of wastes. **Below** - An armored outlet that helps to disperse the energy of rain water and prevent erosion of the trench. **Far left** - New gutters and a gravel trench will help keep mud from accumulating next to this new arena.*

Announcements

Sign up soon for these great classes!

Summer on the Farm

When: Tuesday, June 26th
Time: 6 PM - 9 PM
Where: Loyal Heights Community Center
Cost: Free

Tansy - What you DON'T know could kill your horse

When: Wednesday, June 27th,
Time: 6 PM - 9 PM
Where: Horseshoe Grange, Clearview area
Cost: Free

Shopping for Horse Property: How to Select a Suitable Site

When Wednesday, July 11th
Time: 6 PM - 9 PM
Where: Kellogg Marsh Grange, Marysville
Cost: Free

Fall In Place for Winter

When Wednesday, August 1st
Time: 6 PM - 9 PM
Where: Kellogg Marsh Grange, Marysville
Cost: Free

Picking the Right Property and Compost Options

When: Saturday, Sept. 29th
Time: 9 AM – 1 PM
Where: Cedarhome Elementary, Stanwood
Cost: Free class/small fee for optional worm bins.

All of the classes listed above are sponsored by Snohomish Conservation District. Additional sponsors include Washington State Department of Ecology and Snohomish County Surface Water Management. For more information on these workshops call 425-335-5634, ext 4, or visit our website at www.snohomishcd.org.
To register, email workshops@snohomishcd.org. Please note in the email which classes you wish to sign up for, how many will be coming, and if you need a map or directions emailed or mailed to you. Most directions appear on our website just prior to the classes. Worm bin fees can be paid onsite.

New Grant Focuses on City Streams

By Lois Ruskell

Snohomish Conservation District was recently awarded a grant by the Washington State Department of Ecology to work on water quality in urban streams. The grant is tied to two areas of the county, the City of Snohomish, and the Swamp/Scriber Creek areas near Lynnwood. The grant is geared to reach out to urban landowners with property near or on streams.

The grant's focus will be to increase public awareness on what a healthy stream looks like and what citizens can do to keep their streams healthy. District staff will work with residents on issues involving eroded stream banks, sustainable yard and garden practices, pet waste, naturescaping, and septic system awareness.

In addition, we will be publishing a streamside landowners booklet next year that covers many sustainable living and water quality issues. Innovative ideas like rain gardens (shown at right), compost fences, naturescaping and more will be covered. We will also be updating our website so residents can access up-to-date information and resources.

Rain gardens can be a practical and attractive way to handle excess rain water and reduce flooding.

District staff taught an urban composting class in Mukilteo in 2006.

Conservation District staff will be available for presentations to groups on many of these issues, and we will have a restoration technician available for free, on-site recommendations.

Any citizen or group wishing more information can contact Lois Ruskell or Victor Insera at 425-335-5634, ext 108 and 106, respectively.

Whole Foods to Help Small Farmers

John Mackey has announced that Whole Foods Market will make $10 million available annually for low-interest loans to small, local agricultural producers. Whole Foods Market is now accepting applications.

If you wish to apply for a loan, please remember that loan recipients must:

- **Meet Whole Foods Market's Quality Standards**
- **Use funds for expansion (e.g., buy more animals or new equipment/infrastructure, expand crops), not operating expenses**
- **Meet Whole Foods Market's Animal Compassion Standards (if meat or dairy producers)**
- **Have a viable business plan and adequate cash flow to service debt**

For more details, please download the Program Overview at: http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/products/locallygrown/lplp/programoverview.pdf. General questions can be directed to the program coordinators at: lplp@wholefoods.com

What is a Habitat Restoration Specialist?

There's a new face here at the Conservation District, Habitat Restoration Specialist Victor Insera. Victor will be working with rural and urban landowners in the Snohomish River basin and Lake Washington drainages to reduce pollution and restore fish and wildlife habitat. He will also help landowners use low impact development (LID) methods which decrease the effects of hard surfaces like asphalt and concrete on local streams and wetlands.

Victor and his wife Beth enjoy hiking the Northwest.

Victor has a B.S. in Environmental Forest Biology with a concentration in Wildlife Biology. He graduated from the State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Prior to coming to the District, Victor worked as a Forestry/Wildlife Planner for Whatcom County Planning and Development Services and as a Wildlife/Stream Restoration Specialist for the California Tahoe Conservancy. Victor and his wife Beth live in Bellingham with their dog Jake, where they enjoy mountain biking, snowboarding, hiking, and hockey.

Ag Plastic Event a Hit

Despite some very rainy and windy weather, the Snohomish County Ag Plastics Recycling event held June 9th and 10th went very well. An exceptional group of WSU Master Gardeners, agency staff, and folks from Silverdale Recycling and Lautenbach Industries managed to keep up with the pots, twine, and plastics that arrived in cars, trucks and vans.

Some of the pots collected were obviously vintage, judging from the moss on them and the lack of any recycling symbol whatsoever. As the photo at left shows, even kids helped to unload their familys' contribution. The plastics will go to one of two facilities to be ground into plastic pellets to make new plastics. Silverdale Recycling has a new, state-of-the-art facility in British Columbia.

We hope to hold more of these events in the future, so start stockpiling your pots and twine and stay-tuned for upcoming dates.

Snohomish Conservation District

Board of Supervisors
Duane Weston, Chair
Monte Marti, Vice-chair
Cam Allen, Treasurer
Mark Winterhalter
Wiard Groeneveld
Associate Members
Dick Barr
District Manager
Kim Levesque

Phone 425-335-5634, ext 4
FAX 425-335-5024
Staff Contact:
Lois Ruskell
425-335-5634, ext 108
Editing: Donna Gleisner
The Written Edge
425-923-7110

www.snohomishcd.org

The NEXUS is published quarterly and distributed free of charge to residents of the District. Funding provided by Snohomish County Surface Water Management, Washington Department of Ecology, and the Washington State Conservation Commission.