

# SNOHOMISH CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## The Nexus



# Capturing Rainwater, Curbing Soil Creep

By Lois Ruskell, Public Relations Coordinator

It can't be any fun to sit at your kitchen table and watch the soil on the hillside above your backyard slowly slide down and envelope your house and garage. Not only is it not fun, it can be stressful knowing the foundation of your house and garage are surely rotting from wet soil and the constant pressure of soil creeping downslope.

Chris Martinez knows that feeling all too well. Her home sits half way down a hill in Everett and water was a big problem. It came towards her property from two different directions - from their neighbor's property on one side, and from an alley at the top of their sloped backyard. She and her husband, Douglas McCullough, wanted to find ways they could capture the rain from their roofs, reduce the size of their lawn, and curb the progression of soggy soil toward their buildings.

### It All Began with Rain Barrels

Because Chris receives the Nexus newsletter, she was aware of our rain barrel program. She called the Conservation District asking for a planner to visit. She needed some 'site-specific' ideas for their lot, as well as help planning drainage improvements. In the meantime, Chris purchased two rain barrels from the City of Everett's rain barrel program and began educating herself on capturing rainwater.

She learned that because her garage roof is made of composite materials, the water collected could contain potentially harmful impurities if it is used on certain vegetables and root crops. So, the water collected from their garage roof would only be used on fruit trees. Chris and Doug chose a metal roof to replace their old house roof so they could use rainwater collected there to water their vegetable garden.

### Tackling Rain Runoff and Soil Creep

Chris learned about one of our water containment classes offered in Stanwood and went to hear District Engineer Derek Hann talk about using rain barrels and cisterns. She met Derek after class to discuss her storm water issues, and began looking into other improvements as well. Chris found experts Zsolt Pasztor, from Innovative Landscape Technologies, and Matt Freed, from NW Hardscapes, and hired them to clear soil away from buildings, re-grade their backyard, install French drains and a dry well, and shore up and rebuild the walls on two corners of the garage and house. Now, you can walk through Chris and Doug's backyard on a rainy day and keep your shoes dry!



Chris Martinez stands beside a new retaining wall and the garden area created with soil from excavation around her buildings.

Re-grading their backyard allowed the couple to do away with their lawn, and replace it with a new, mostly-flat garden area. Soil excavated from around the buildings was re-used to fill in behind new retaining walls and create the new garden.

### What Rain Barrels, Berms and Cisterns Can Do



Fifteen rainbarrels line the side of the Martinez-McCullough home in Everett.

Chris was eager to collect even more rain water and use it to irrigate new and existing vegetable beds, so they called the District's rain barrel guru, Bobby Butler, to bring more rain barrels – not just one or two, but 20! Fifteen of them now line one side of their house, sitting on a new gravel path next to a berm planted with low-growing native plants. The berm helps filter and direct surface water away from the Martinez-McCullough home to a new dry well in the front yard.

Behind their garage are the other five District rain barrels, along with the two from the City. Chris wants to hook up two more rain barrels on the corner by the kitchen to water a side yard. Then she plans on putting an above-ground cistern on a flat area up by the alley at the back of her property. A pump will move collected water from the rain barrels uphill to the cistern, where it will be stored until it's needed in summer. Gravity will feed the water on-demand, when plants need it most, and when water is most scarce.

### Taking Advantage of Incentives

Chris was able to take advantage of a cost-share program run by the Snohomish Conservation District. It helps pay for improvements that protect water quality and prevent storm water from running directly into storm drains, which empty into our streams and eventually, Puget Sound. Water that is slowed down and filtered through soil doesn't harm fish, shellfish or the health of Puget Sound itself like unfiltered (polluted) water does. The cost-share program helped Chris pay for the labor and half the rain barrels she purchased.

Chris is proud of her new water containment system and said, "It's the right thing to do, and in the long run, will pay for itself". Working with the Conservation District's urban team "... just took some following up on my part, they're all terrific", she added. We at the District sincerely enjoy helping people solve their drainage issues, create food gardens from lawns, and save and reuse their water. We've changed with the times over our 75-year history, but our focus remains on local residents, farmers, foresters and landowners who are challenged by natural resource issues and want to 'do the right thing'.

For more on the safety of collected rain water from various roof types, check out this article from the Sightline Institute: <http://www.sightline.org/2015/01/07/a-green-light-for-using-rain-barrel-water-on-garden-edibles/>.

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**Inside**  
Stilly View Forest  
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Events and Awards



## Snohomish Conservation District's Annual Plant Sale



### Volunteer With Us!

We're looking for volunteers to help us bundle, sort and pot plants before and after our Native Plant Sale. For every four-hour shift worked, volunteers will receive specialty native plants, not for sale, available only to volunteers. To learn more and sign-up, visit [www.theplantsale.org/volunteer](http://www.theplantsale.org/volunteer) or email Laura Goff at [laura@snohomishcd.org](mailto:laura@snohomishcd.org) or call 425-377-7018.



Snohomish Conservation District  
Plant Sale Guide

Download the Plant Sale Guide at  
<http://snohomishcd.org/annual-plant-sale>

### The Details Conservation Plant Sale

Saturday, February 27, 2016  
8:30 AM to 4:00 PM

#### Sale and Pick-up Location:

Evergreen State Fairgrounds  
Commercial Building  
14405 - 179th Ave SE, Monroe

**You Can Pre-order Plants!**  
Until 5:00 PM on February 17

**Order at this Website:**  
[www.theplantsale.org](http://www.theplantsale.org)

#### New & Returning This Year

- Rain barrels for \$45
- Pollinator packets
  - \$8 (small)
  - \$15 (large)
- Plant protectors
- New ground cover plants
- Edible plants

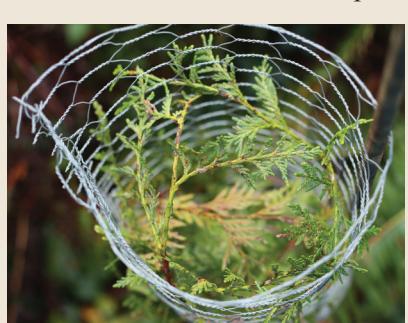


Plant sale manager Ryan Williams demonstrates how to prepare a plant protector sleeve before placing it around small seedlings.

## Protecting Young Conifer Seedlings

What can you learn from an experienced forester about keeping young trees safe from hungry wildlife? Plenty! Duane Weston (see article on page 3) uses two simple approaches to keep new seedlings safe, one of which he developed.

Photos on the right and lower right show simple cages that Duane constructs from wire, which he then attaches to a piece of rebar. The wire prevents animals from eating the tree and he moves it up the rebar as the tree grows to keep its crown safe from deer.



The second way Duane protects seedlings is by planting a spruce seedling next to a cedar to discourage deer from eating the cedar (photo lower left). Spruce have sharp needles which poke deer in the nose. When the cedar is tall enough to not be damaged by browsing animals, he removes the spruce tree, allowing the cedar to grow faster.



#### How to Make and Use a Tree Protector

Cut 18 inches off a roll of screen, roll it into a tube and bend the wire ends down to hold the tube shape. This gives you a 6-inch diameter tube.

Slide the tube onto a 1/4-inch diameter iron rebar, cut five feet long, and poked about 12 inches into the ground alongside the planted tree. The tube is designed to protect the top 18 inches of the tree as that is the height of the screen.

As the tree grows in height, slide each tube up the rebar to again protect the top 18 inches of the tree top where the new growth is. Once the tree reaches five feet in height, leave the tube for one more growing season. Before the next growing season occurs, either slide or cut the tube off the tree.

Leave the rebar to discourage male deer from rubbing their antlers on the tree stem. After the tree stem becomes rigid enough not to bend when a deer rubs his antlers, pull the rebar out of the ground to avoid having it become imbedded into the expanding tree trunk.



(See above for plant sale news and a photo of blue plastic tree protectors that will be for sale through the District's annual plant sale)

# Life on a Tree Farm Never Slows Down.... or So It Seems

By Lois Ruskell, Public Relations Coordinator

## 75 Years and Counting!

As part of Snohomish Conservation District's 75th anniversary this year, we are highlighting some projects and people who have helped us become one of the most successful Districts in Washington State. We begin with Duane Weston, a local forester, who served on the District Board of Supervisors for many years and is now an Associate Board Member. Duane served as Chairman of the Board when the District first made efforts to gain stable funding through an annual assessment. The District now has two assessments, one for Camano Island (through Island County government), and one for most of Snohomish County.

### Stilly View Forest

One thing you hear a lot when you take a walk in the woods with local forester Duane Weston is his to-do list. He frequently mentions where he needs to fill in with new trees, clear a fallen log, clean up one of many trails, add more wildlife habitat, or thin an older stand of trees. There seems to be a never-ending list of work on a 40-plus acre tree farm, but you can tell Duane relishes the opportunity to work on it and make on-going improvements.

Duane and his late wife, Anna Marie, purchased 52 acres north of Arlington in 1977. They named it Stilly View Forest and later sold four adjoining acres to son Howard. With a degree in forestry from the University of Washington, and hands-on experience as manager of the 15,000-acre Pilchuck Tree Farm nearby (until he retired in 2001), Duane and Anna Marie set about creating their own tree farm.

### Creating a Tree Farm

In 1978 the Weston's logged their first stand of second growth Douglas fir to help pay off the property. The couple's two sons, Howard and Rob, as well as Duane's brother Alvin (aka Al or Lee), were a big help planting the logged areas during those early years. Ten-year-old Howard walked beside the two-wheeled planter handing Duane Douglas firs seedlings in bunches of 20, while seven-year-old Rob's job was to ride along and tell his dad when to plant by watching a rope tied to the tractor wheel. When it reached top center he would yell "plant", which happened about every eight feet, unless the tractor wheels started spinning (so there is an errant tree or two still standing today). They planted 4,300 seedlings that day in seven hours. Thirty-eight growing seasons later, the dominant trees they planted are now more than 90 feet tall and the boys have fond memories of those days to share with their kids. These trees are a testament to the family's efforts to be a truly family-run operation.



A tree shows signs of lightning that swirled down its trunk during a recent storm.

trees stand. These provide wildlife habitat, shade the water and provide large pieces of woody debris to the stream. All this helps salmon, as it creates pools that are cool resting areas during their migration.

### Providing for Wildlife

Duane is keenly aware of the wildlife that have made the tree farm their home. He leaves a few snags (tall dead trees) for ants and woodpeckers (as long as the snags aren't near roads or power lines). He can point to several trees that offer deer shelter from the rain. Occasionally he makes angled cuts in a stump (see photo) that critters can take cover in and he often leaves a hollow tree or brush pile in place to shelter small animals from weather and predators.



An angled cut in an old stump is the perfect place for a little critter to hide from raptors.



### Supporting the Forest Industry

Duane's interests haven't been limited to his job as Forestry Manager at Pilchuck Tree Farm or as a small forest landowner. The Weston's have been quite supportive of the forestry industry statewide, offering their tree farm as an educational site, serving on a multitude of boards, and helping new owners learn how to create and manage a successful tree farm. Besides serving on the Snohomish Conservation District Board, Duane is currently on the Washington Forest Protection Board, the WACD Plant Material Center Board and the Stillaguamish Watershed Council.

Duane and the Weston family continue to actively manage their small tree farm. Two years ago, Duane harvested and shipped 14 truckloads of marketable timber to local log processing facilities. Recently, the family culled and thinned some small diameter trees which he shipped to Okanogan-area ranchers to use for fencing projects. Besides providing the fence posts, Duane also traveled there to help install more than five miles of fence for a rancher who lost fences during last summer's intense wild fires.



Duane demonstrates his newest machine, a log splitter, which helps him split wood much faster. No more sore muscles!

### What Spare Time?

In his spare time, Duane remains very active. He works with his own specialized fleet of equipment — some as old as the tree farm itself — including machinery he has adapted to better fit his needs. He uses some equipment to cut, split and haul firewood; other machines help keep three miles of trail open as a firebreak, and keep all areas of the tree farm accessible.

Duane also builds bird houses, feeding platforms and other wildlife enhancements. Additionally, Duane spends quality time in the kitchen. He learned to cook during Anna Marie's illness and has become quite a pie baker. The grandchildren love his pies so much that they gave him a "Pie Baking Grandpa" apron.

We appreciate the many dedicated years of passion and service Duane and Anna Marie provided to the Snohomish Conservation District and the forest industry, and the support he has given our staff, supervisors and forest landowners near and far.

Without Duane, we (and many others) wouldn't know quite so much about what it takes to run a successful, sustainable small-scale tree farm.



One of many 'critter houses' that Duane has built to encourage and shelter birds, bats, squirrels and more.

Photos by Kailyn Wentz

# State Tax Option Can Help Private Forests Survive

By Kevin Zobrist, WSU Extension Forester

If you own five acres or more of forested property in Washington, you might want to know about something called “designated forest land”. This is a property tax assessment option for forest landowners in our state that can lower your taxes.

Normally, real property is taxed based on an estimate of its fair market value. This should reflect what is called the “highest and best use”, which is the most economically advantageous use of the land (often real estate development). With the designated forest land option however, the taxable value of forested land is assessed for forestry use, which is a much lower value. This option was established by the State Legislature in the 1970's.

The purpose of a designated forest land tax option is to encourage forest landowners to maintain their land as forest. The Legislature recognized that productive forest lands provide a multitude of essential public benefits, such as:

- ❖ supplying us with clean water and clean air
- ❖ protecting the soil
- ❖ reducing flood damage
- ❖ slowing storm water
- ❖ providing habitat and food for wildlife
- ❖ beauty and recreational opportunities
- ❖ jobs

## Forested Land Can be Taxed for Less

The assessed value of designated forest land was set in state statute, and in 2014 ranged from \$1/acre to \$189/acre, based on soil productivity and the ease/cost of timber extraction. Current values can be found on the State Department of Revenue website at: [http://dor.wa.gov/content/findtaxesandrates/othertaxes/timber/forst\\_lvs.aspx](http://dor.wa.gov/content/findtaxesandrates/othertaxes/timber/forst_lvs.aspx).

In contrast, assessed fair market value could be thousands of dollars per acre. So, designating your land as forest can reduce your tax burden by up to 99 percent on the forested portion of your property. The tax assessment for the residential portion of your property and any structures would not see a reduction.

## Details of a Forest Land Designation

To be designated as forest, the land must be at least five contiguous acres of forest (which can comprise multiple adjacent parcels), not including any residential portion. If there is a residential portion, typically a minimum of one acre is excluded. Thus, landowners living on their property should have at least six acres total, five of which must be forest.

The law specifies that land designated as forest must be “devoted primarily to growing and harvesting timber”. Landowners who are primarily interested in aesthetics, recreation, habitat, etc. or otherwise don't intend to use their land for timber production should not enroll in this option.

While designated forest land is a state law, it is administered at the county level by the county assessor's office. At the assessor's discretion, a written timber management plan may be required when enrolling your forest land, or when you sell it. WSU Extension's Forest Stewardship Coached Planning classes (<http://forestry.wsu.edu>) are designed to help landowners write their own qualifying timber management plan. Landowners can also pay a consultant to write their plan.

## 'Forest Land' versus 'Open Space Timber'

Twenty acres used to be the minimum for designated forest land. However, in 2014 it was reduced to five acres. A separate but similar program, the “open space timber designation”, was available to landowners with five or more acres. The law was changed to streamline and simplify things by not having two separate programs.

Counties aren't required to eliminate the open space timber program designation, but they're given the option to do so. Many counties are currently doing this, so you may receive a notice from the county assessor that your land is being transferred from open space timber to designated forest land. This doesn't change your tax benefit or otherwise have negative impacts, so if you receive this notice, don't be concerned.

## Applying for Forest Land Status

Applications must be received by December 31 for consideration the following year. If the county doesn't make a decision about your application by May 1 that following year, it is automatically considered approved. If your application is approved that following year, your property will be assessed that year at the new lower rate, for taxes payable the year after that.



Forests provide timber, wildlife habitat, water retention and recreation opportunities.

For example, if your application is received before December 31, 2016 and it's approved, your forest property will be assessed at the lower value in 2017 for taxes payable in 2018. The first year of lower tax payments would be 2018.



A nice benefit of owning forestland is firewood! Neatly stacked woodpiles mean you are ready for winter.

## Removing Your Forest from this Status

If you decide to remove the forest land designation at some point, a significant tax (called a compensating tax) must be paid. This tax is calculated by taking the difference between the designated forest land tax assessment and the full value tax assessment in the year of removal and multiplying by nine years (or however many years your forest land was enrolled, if fewer than nine).

## Selling Your Forest under Designated Status

Designated forest land can be sold and can still retain its lower tax status as long as the buyer agrees - in writing - to continue managing it for timber production. This is called a continuance. Your county assessor may require the buyer to submit a new timber management plan if signing a continuance. If the buyer declines a continuance, you must pay the compensating tax before the sale can be recorded.

## Is This Special Designation Fair?

Some people have raised objections to this lower tax status program, claiming that it's not equitable to decrease the tax burden on forest land, because that increases the tax burden on other land. Others, however, note that forestland owners are expected to provide public benefits with no compensation, and also have many regulatory constraints imposed upon them by the public.

Eighty studies nationwide by the American Farmland Trust and others on the cost of community services have found that forest lands contribute far more in taxes than they require in public services (37 cents in services needed for every \$1.00 of tax revenue produced). Residential lands, on the other hand, require more in public services than they contribute in taxes (\$1.19 in services needed for every \$1.00 of tax revenue produced).

You should carefully consider your long-term plans before applying for designated forest land status. If you aren't committed to managing the land for timber production for at least ten years, this designation might not be a good option.

# Searching for Salamanders Makes Winter Fun!

By Lauren Grand, WSU Extension, Forestry Program Coordinator

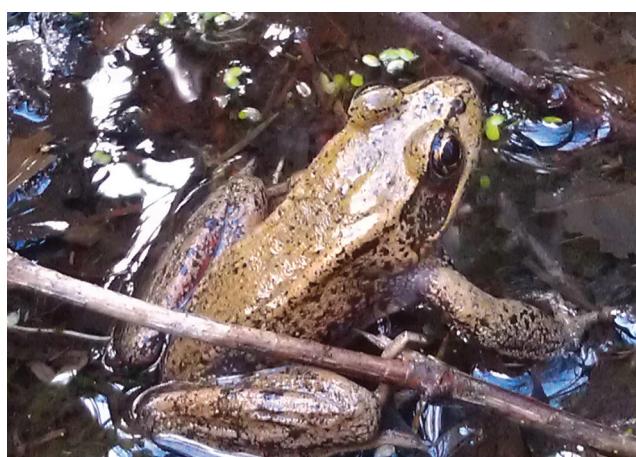
We are at that time of year when many of us join our animal counterparts in hibernation. Now that the holidays are over and the depths of winter have set in, it is too irresistible to not spend our free time snuggled up with a warm mug, blanket, and our favorite loungewear or fuzzy slippers. Even those of us who live and breathe the outdoors are having trouble finding a reason to face the cold and wander outside.

However, winter is the time when some animals are becoming more visibly active in Western Washington. In fact, mid-January is the start of the breeding season for amphibians such as frogs, toads and salamanders. So, leave those fuzzy slippers by the door, put on a pair of mud boots or waders if you got 'em, and let's go 'herping'. The word 'herp' comes from Herpetology, the study of amphibians (including frogs, toads, salamanders, newts) and reptiles (including snakes, lizards, turtles). Herpetology comes from the Greek work 'herpien', meaning to creep. So, 'herping' is a term we use to walk around with the intention of finding herptiles (amphibians or reptiles).

Snohomish County has 12 amphibian species you can look for (11 native and one non-native/invasive). Of the 12 amphibians that live here, there are:

- ❖ 5 frogs - Pacific tree frog, Northern red-legged frog, Cascade frog, tailed frog, and American bullfrog\*
- ❖ 5 salamanders - Northwestern salamander, giant salamander, long-toed salamander, Western red-backed salamander, and *Ensatina*
- ❖ 1 newt - rough-skinned newt
- ❖ 1 toad - Western toad

(\*Bullfrogs are not native to our region and are extensively eating many of our native amphibians).



A Northern red-legged frog has found some water to sit in.

pond, or stream) to lay their eggs. The rest of the year they spend on dry land (forest or meadow) to look for food. A few salamanders even live and lay their eggs completely on dry land, so it's quite possible to find amphibians on or near your property if you don't live near a wetland. Here are some tips on where and when to find frogs and salamanders – from eggs to adults.

## Where to Find Amphibians

### 1. Look In and Around Ponds, Streams and Wetlands

Most of our native amphibians breed in either still water or streams. If you happen to be near a wetland or pond, walk slowly around the edge, paying special attention to shallow water areas with emerging vegetation. You may see adults laying their eggs on the stems of these plants. This area is also where tadpoles look for food and take refuge from predators. Amphibians that have just recently developed into their adult form will spend time in the moist soil and dense vegetation around the water's edge before moving on to land.

Frogs and salamanders that breed in streams tend to prefer those that are three to nine feet wide and are rocky on the bottom. Check smaller pools that are created from slower moving water, and carefully turn over rocks within these pools and riffles. Streams are also common resting places for amphibians during their migrations because they are a great place to find moisture and food.

### 2. Check under Decaying Wood, Rocks and Leaf Litter

When amphibians aren't breeding, they use meadows and forests as places to look for food, hide from predators, and keep cool and moist. While herping, try these tips:

- Gently turn over medium to large-sized decaying wood where a salamander might hide and/or munch on insects, and return\*
- Inspect around rocks that can create shelter and maintain high relative humidity
- Carefully pull up piles of leaf litter, root balls, and moss-mats, and return\*

(Please remember to put what you moved back to its original location and position so these important parts of the ecosystem remain for all the creatures that live there).



A Northwestern salamander blends in with leaves.

### 3. Identification Guides give you Animal-Specific Tips

Bringing a field guide will give you more tips on how to find and identify your new friends. Here are some to consider:

- ❖ [Amphibians of the Pacific Northwest](#), edited by Lawrence Jones, William Leonard and Deanna Olson
- ❖ [A Field Guide to Western Reptiles and Amphibians - Third Edition](#), by Robert C. Stebbins
- ❖ [Amphibians of Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia](#), by Corkran and Toms
- ❖ [The Washington Department of Natural Resources](#) has an online Herp Atlas with great amphibian fact sheets at: <http://www1.dnr.wa.gov/nhp/refdesk/herp/speciesmain.html>

### 4. Manage your Property to Attract Amphibians

Use these easy suggestions from [Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest](#), by biologist Russell Link.

- Maintain woodlands, wetlands, meadows, stream corridors and shorelines
- Protect buffer areas next to streams, lakes or ponds
- Wherever possible, protect migration paths between uplands and breeding sites
- Leave a portion of your grass unmowed
- Preserve leaf litter under trees and shrubs
- Retain stumps, logs, rootwads, rock piles and other debris that provides a cool, moist habitat for amphibians
- Consider building a pond
- Fence large ponds to prevent access by livestock
- Avoid using pesticides and herbicides

### When to Look for Amphibians

#### 1. Know their Migration and Breeding Seasons

Mid-January to May is the best time to find adult frogs and salamanders. This is when our native amphibians are making their way to wetlands to lay their eggs. You can often find the adults migrating to (as well as in and around) the edges of streams and ponds looking for mates. This is also the best time to find egg masses. Amphibians prefer water temperatures slightly above freezing to lay their eggs in. As the water warms, the eggs begin to hatch into tadpoles. March through August is the best time to find tadpoles and juveniles. Tadpoles will develop into land-dwelling juveniles during this period and begin to explore beyond the wetland or pond as they journey onto dry land.



A Pacific tree frog sits on the branch of a Devil's Club.

#### 2. Amphibians are Most Active on Warm Rainy Nights

On warm rainy nights there is no chance of amphibians drying out, so they are more active on land and are therefore much easier to spot. This is especially true during spring and fall along trails, roads and other openings when adult amphibians are on their way to or from nearby streams, wetlands or ponds.

#### 3. Stay Safe, Bring a Friend

Wear proper attire. Stay warm and wear mud boots or waders if walking around wetlands. Always tell someone where you are going and bring another person with you. Wetland edges can be mucky and unstable so it's a good idea to go with a friend in case you get stuck in the muck. Slipping into a stream or pond in the winter can quickly lead to hypothermia. Having a friend with you can reduce the risk of you getting hurt or sick.

### Be Careful Handling Frogs and Salamanders

It is not suggested that you touch or pick up amphibians, but if you do - please be very careful and wear gloves. Handling amphibians can be hazardous to their health and yours. Amphibians absorb things through their skin much more easily than we do. Don't wear any lotion, bug repellent, or other chemicals – all can be harmful to amphibians if it gets on their skin. Some of our native amphibians excrete toxins when they think they're in danger (for example, when we pick them up). Touching your mouth or eyes after handling amphibians with these toxins can make you sick. Now that you know all the secrets to the wonderful world of frogs and salamanders, dress warmly, grab a friend and rain or shine, go see how many you can find.

# Is Your Horse Property a Winter Wonderland or a Muddy Mess?

By Cayley Allen, Outreach Assistant

Winter has officially begun - are you and your horses ready? If you haven't already prepared for more rain and cold here in Western Washington, it's not too late. Here are a few tips and tricks to beat the winter weather this year and establish more permanent solutions for next year.

## Lighting Makes Chores More Pleasant

As we lose daylight, don't find yourself doing chores in the dark. Install lights to help you do chores more efficiently and safely. Have a routine in place; this will make chores seem easier and more manageable for you, and your horses will become accustomed to it as well.

## Create a Special Dry Area for Your Horses

Update or create a paddock for winter confinement. Known as a "Heavy Use Area" or "Sacrifice Area", this is an area you sacrifice to keep your pastures healthy and mud-free. Horses should be kept in confinement areas throughout the wet season. Saturated soils and dormant plants cannot survive continuous grazing and trampling. When soils are wet they are easily compacted, suffocating the roots of grass plants and doing long-term damage to vital air and water channels in the soil.



A heavy use area like the one above helps keep animals off soggy, wet pastures in the winter. This makes chores easier, protects their hooves and helps prevent compaction and over-use of pastures. Your pasture will recover much more quickly in the spring.

A heavy use area, or sacrifice paddock, is a place where your horse can be outside without harming your pastures. Materials such as gravel, sand or hog fuel are used to create a mud-free environment for your horses when weather doesn't permit them to be on pastures. These materials are also great for walkways and around gates.

## No Manure = No Mud

Horses produce about 50 pounds of manure a day. If it's left to be trampled into the soil by livestock, it will quickly turn to mud. To keep your heavy use area working for you, pick up manure daily or at least every three days. Cleaning manure out of confinement areas is the simplest and most important thing you can do to prevent mud. Place your manure pile close to your heavy use area. It will help cut down on chore time and be more efficient.



Covering your manure piles can be as easy as adding tarps and weighing them down with boards or bricks.

## Covering Compost Bins and Use of Shelters

Covering your manure pile will help it decompose faster, reduce mud and odors, and prevent weed seeds from landing on top and contaminating your final product — clean compost. This is also crucial for protecting water quality. By covering your manure pile, you'll keep bacteria and nutrients from washing off, leaking off your property and into nearby streams and rivers. Many water bodies in our area exceed the state standard for bacteria and nutrients, making them unhealthy for swimming, fishing and other recreational activities. It's important to think about our impact on these shared resources when you are designing and managing your horse property.

A compost bin system is a smart way to manage a manure pile and to aid the composting process at the same time. If the pile is not undercover, a tarp is the most inexpensive way to cover your pile. Plan to weigh the tarp down with boards or bricks to keep it in place. By covering it, you can regulate how wet it gets in the winter. Compost should be as moist as a wrung-out sponge. Too wet or too dry inhibits the composting process. It also needs some oxygen so that it continues to cook, or break down. The hot compost process will also kill weed seeds.

Do your horses have somewhere to get out of nasty weather? Now is the perfect time to get those shelters built or repaired to keep wind and rain off your horses. Place your shelter next to your heavy use area for constant easy access. Feeding in a shelter is also recommended as it keeps hay and grain dry. In case of foul weather, be sure to have a backup water supply if you lose water due to a power outage. It's also important to have a way to supply water when temperatures are below freezing.

## Got Gutters?

It's really important to direct water away from high-traffic areas during the winter months. Install gutters and downspouts on barns and shelters to divert clean rain water away from animal confinement areas, stall entryways and other high traffic areas. Ideally, the outlet for your gutters should send water to a well-vegetated area or filter strip. Clean water can also be collected in stock watering tanks, rain barrels or cisterns. Water that exceeds the capacity of stock watering tanks should be diverted away from confinement areas.

Winter is here, so don't find yourself fighting the weather this year. Prepare now and think about what else you can do next year. To schedule a site visit or find out more about winter horse care, contact us at 425-335-5634 or farmplanners@snohomishcd.org.

## Getting Help on Your Farm

The District has many grant opportunities to help landowners install practices such as heavy use areas. Reimbursement rates depend on the funding source, the practice you want, and your location.

### Best management practices that may qualify for cost-share include:

- Gutters, downspouts and underground outlets for existing buildings
- Heavy-use areas/sacrifice areas
- Use exclusions - fencing animals out of waterways, wetlands and ditches
- Compost bins/waste storage

❖ Reimbursement rates range from 50 to 100 percent. Landowner covers 100 percent of the costs of implementing the project up-front, and will be reimbursed after the project is completed.

❖ The District determines eligibility for cost-share based on highest priority and the greatest likelihood of improving water quality in the local watershed.

❖ The District will provide you with an engineered design for your practice and instructions on maintenance.

❖ Labor is reimbursed at \$20 per hour and is subject to prior approval.

❖ Projects are limited by county/state/federal regulations and will be determined upon application.

Find out more about the District's cost share program and see photos of some installations at: <http://snohomishcd.org/cost-share-basics> or call 425-335-5634 and ask for a farm planner.

# What's New With Sound Horsekeeping

As with all things, change is inevitable. Such is the case with Snohomish Conservation District's Sound Horsekeeping program. Read on to hear a message from Jessica Paige, the former program manager for Sound Horsekeeping, and meet our new program manager, Cayley Allen from Stanwood.



## Message from Jessica

*"At the end of September, I decided to move on from the Conservation District and take a new job. While I was sad to go, this change will allow me to explore a new field closer to home."*

*"It was such a pleasure to get to know so many of you through the Sound Horsekeeping program. Thankfully, I will keep working with Horses for Clean Water, as I have for almost twenty years."*

Jessica Paige

*I am so happy that Sound Horsekeeping will continue at the District with Cayley Allen. As a horse owner herself, she has a clear understanding of the joys and challenges that come with managing horse property. I know she'll do a great job and that she'll enjoy working with all of you, just as I have. I hope our paths cross again in the future—happy trails!"*

## Sound Horsekeeping website:

<http://snohomishcd.org/sound-horsekeeping-sign-program>.

Want to start earning your sign? Call Cayley for a site visit to help you plan for the best practices for your specific farm. There is no obligation, and all District services are free. See box below for details.



## Earn Your Sound Horsekeeping Sign

If you already have Sound Horsekeeping practices in place (covering manure, using a winter paddock, preventing overgrazing, etc.), you may qualify for a Sound Horsekeeping sign. To see a list of eligible practices and apply, go to the Sound Horsekeeping website: <http://snohomishcd.org/sound-horsekeeping-sign-program> and click on 'Apply for the Sign'.

Once you've filled out the form online, Cayley or a farm planner will visit your property for a brief walkabout and go through the checklist with you. If you have questions, contact Cayley at [Callen@snohomishcd.org](mailto:Callen@snohomishcd.org) or 425-377-7009.



Cayley Allen, Sound Horsekeeping Program Manager, with her quarter horse filly, Andie, near Silvana.

# Crew Plants Six Acres and Counting

October 2015 marked the beginning of a new Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew year. The Snohomish Conservation District has been partnering with the WCC since 2013, contracting a six-person crew to help restore riparian areas and build rain gardens throughout Snohomish County. Contact Carson Moscoso at 425-377-7027 if you would like to learn more or have a restoration project in mind.

The WCC is a state-wide job training program for young adults (ages 18-25), and military veterans of all ages, that provides hands-on experience in the environmental field. These corps members are AmeriCorps volunteers that receive an education award upon finishing their year of service. They can either use this award to attend an accredited post-high school institution, or pay their school loans if they have already completed a program. Keep track of our crew at: <http://snohomishcd.org/crew-corner>.

## Meet our 2015-16 WCC crew:

**Ali Trout, Crew Supervisor.** Ali is a native of Long Beach, California. She received a degree in environmental studies and a GIS certification from the University of Pittsburgh. Ali is taking over as crew supervisor this year after completing a year as a WCC supervisor in Pierce County.

**Kelli Sheldon, Corps Member.** Kelli graduated in June of 2015 from Western Washington University with a degree in Environmental Science. She was born and raised in Washington and is very excited to be working for the WCC and the Snohomish Conservation District.

**Alex Frederick, 2nd year Corps Member.** Alex was hired by the WCC last June and spent four months on the Puyallup urban forestry crew. She went to Highline College and plans on going back to school next year to pursue an environmental science degree.

**Christopher Rodriguez, Assistant Supervisor.** After being promoted to assistant supervisor half-way through last year, Christopher has returned for a second year to be assistant supervisor for a full term. Christopher was born and raised in New York City and moved to Washington in 2002 after finishing his enlistment with the United States Marine Corps. In his free time, he enjoys fishing with his wife and three kids.



The Washington Conservation Corps members take a break from planting. Left to right: Ali Trout, Kelli Sheldon, Alex Frederick, Christopher Rodriguez, Shawn Cowley, Tommy Torell.

**Shawn Cowley, 2nd year Corps Member.** Born and raised in Texas, Shawn moved to Washington two years ago straight out of high school. Last year he was a corps member on the Pierce Conservation District WCC crew, planting riparian buffers and removing invasive weeds.

**Tommy Torell, Corps Member.** Tommy just graduated from Mount Vernon Christian High School in June, 2015. He is still figuring out what his interests are, but he does enjoy being outside and physical labor. One day Tommy and a friend aspire to own the top bacon restaurant in the country.

These six corps members will be out in the wet, cold, windy weather all winter planting several of the Snohomish Conservation District's stream restoration projects. They have already planted six acres, and by the end of next September they will have contributed to over 20 acres of planting and maintaining streamside areas. They'll have also constructed 15-20 rain gardens throughout Snohomish County. Washington Conservation Corps is a great program for young adults interested in the environmental field, and the Snohomish Conservation District is proud to be partnering with them to accomplish their urban and rural habitat projects.

# Upcoming Events

## 2016 Country Living Expo and Cattlemen's Winterschool

Saturday, January 30, 2016

Doors open at 7:30 AM, Classes begin at 9 AM

Stanwood High School

7400 272nd St NW, Stanwood

Learn more at: [skagit.wsu.edu/countrylivingexpo](http://skagit.wsu.edu/countrylivingexpo)

### Expo Registration Costs:

Event registration includes morning snacks, lunch, five classes and the 70-vendor trade show. There are 170 classes this year!

Regular/Adult: \$75

Student ages 12-18: \$40 (\$10 if student sponsorship is requested)

At the Country Living Expo and Cattlemen's Winterschool, you can attend classes on a multitude of topics, network with other small farmers, enjoy a prime rib or vegetarian lunch and visit with local agricultural businesses. New this year is a Fleece and Fiber Palooza show with awards. Also, five farm tours are available in Carnation, Clear Lake, Redmond, Stanwood and on Lopez Island. Presented by WSU Livestock Master Foundation, WSU Extension and the Cattlemen's Association.

## Polestar Farm: Making Improvements That Provide Income and Protect Salmon

Saturday, February 13, 10 - 11 AM

Lake Stevens, (address emailed upon registration)

FREE, Register at: [http://snocd.org/polestar\\_tour](http://snocd.org/polestar_tour)

Polestar Farm is a horse training and boarding facility operated by international event rider Meika Decher and her husband, Mark Salser. They not only focus on producing competitive and happy horses and riders at their 400-acre farm, they also have worked to improve farm access with bridges, control knotweed and install buffers that provide additional annual income.

In 2002, Meika and Mark took advantage of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and worked with the Snohomish Conservation District to remove two crushed culverts that prevented fish passage on Glover Creek, a tributary to the Pilchuck River. The culverts were replaced by two large bridge slabs (one shown at right) and the area replanted with native willows and cottonwood trees. An intensive program with the Adopt-A-Stream Foundation was initiated to combat invasive Japanese Knotweed. Come see how this project has improved access for the owners, provided an annual rental payment and opened up spawning beds for salmon. Rain or shine - bring your waders!



## 11th Annual Port Susan Snow Goose Birding Festival

Saturday and Sunday, February 27 & 28

Various locations around Stanwood and Camano Island

Go on a birding walk, hear great speakers talk about migrating snow geese and trumpeter swans, and enjoy browsing the booths and talking with other birders. Learn more at [www.snowgoosefest.org](http://www.snowgoosefest.org).

## Election Notice

An election for a board seat on the Snohomish Conservation District Board of Supervisors will be held on Tuesday, March 15, 2016 at the District office, 528 91st Ave NE, Lake Stevens. Polls will open at 2:00 PM and close at 6:00 PM. Registered voters who reside within the Conservation District boundaries are eligible to vote. Absentee ballots are also available at the District office. They must be requested on or before 3:00 PM, February 23, 2016 and must be returned to the District office by 6:00 PM, March 15, 2016.

## Two Board Positions Open

The District has one elected and one appointed volunteer board position open. Both positions are for three-year terms on the District Board of Supervisors. To be eligible, a candidate must be a registered voter residing in the conservation district and may be required to own land or operate a farm. A conservation district supervisor is a public official who serves without compensation and who sets policy and direction for the Conservation District. The filing deadline to run for these positions is 3:00 PM, February 16, 2016. To file to be on the ballot for the elected position, download forms PF-A and PF-B at: <http://scc.wa.gov/elections/> or request forms from the District office (528 91st Ave NE, Lake Stevens, WA 98292) or from the Washington State Conservation Commission. For the appointed position, potential candidates must fill out the online form AF-1 at the same website.

Please contact Election Supervisor Cam Allen at the District office at 425-377-7007 or by email at [cam@snohomishcd.org](mailto:cam@snohomishcd.org) for more information. You may also contact the Washington State Conservation Commission at 360-407-6200 for more information.

# Riverbend Farm to be Farmed Once More

An historic dairy farm just off Highway 530 in Arlington was recently rescued from development with a unique project to untangle a host of legal issues, including a delinquent bank note and foreclosure judgment, that had tied development and use of the farm up for years.



Andrew Albert, third from right, will be farming Riverbend Farm for the foreseeable future. Other partners include those from Forterra, Snohomish County, City of Arlington and Snohomish Conservation District.

The farm, formerly Faber Dairy, was sold for development before the last real estate bubble and was already platted, permitted and physically prepared for development. Forterra, Snohomish Conservation District, Snohomish County, City of Arlington and the Washington State Conservation Commission formed a partnership to return the prime farmland to its use as agricultural land. That work was successfully completed on December 15, 2015.

A local third-generation farmer, Andrew Albert, will be purchasing and farming the land, which sits in the floodplain of the Stillaguamish River west of Arlington. Albert started a farm-to-consumer hay business in 2003 with fewer than 100 acres and now farms more than 1000 acres, including 600 acres of grass. The protection of 140 acres of highly productive agricultural land by avoiding the development of 13 residences, their septic systems and residential application of fertilizers and pesticides will help avoid risks of potential water contamination during flood events and help protect the shellfish beds in Port Susan and South Skagit Bay. The Snohomish Conservation District is excited to be part of this special opportunity to preserve valuable agriculture land in the Stillaguamish Valley. Hats off to all these groups for their efforts!

## District and Manager Awards

Snohomish Conservation District recently received the '2015 Northwest Area District of the Year' Award from the Washington State Conservation Commission. The Northwest area includes ten Puget Sound conservation districts from Pierce County north to the border, and west through Kitsap, Jefferson and Clallam counties. It also includes San Juan Island and Whidbey Island conservation districts.

According to Mark Clark, Commission Executive Director, the Snohomish Conservation District has demonstrated a drive to innovate and re-create conservation district education and outreach with the development of Better Ground, a new branding and marketing program that began four years ago that includes a website ([www.betterground.org](http://www.betterground.org)), resource materials, how-to videos, and innovative social media aspects. The District has been at the forefront of increasing staff capacity statewide by participating in technical and professional development programs that support other Washington conservation districts. The Board of Supervisors and 24 staff were also commended for their level of responsiveness and collaborative attitude towards promoting locally-led conservation efforts in the District, which includes most of Snohomish County and Camano Island.



Monte Marti, left, helps students plant trees near Marysville.

Monte Marti, District Manager, received the 'Northwest Area Manager of the Year' Award for his commitment to forming productive partnerships with a wide variety of groups including local tribes, non-governmental organizations, municipalities and local citizen advocacy groups. Marti has been District Manager for five years and also serves as Chair of the Puget Sound Conservation District Caucus. Previously Marti served as a District Supervisor for 25 years while working as a program manager at Verizon. Learn more about District programs at [www.snohomishcd.org](http://www.snohomishcd.org).

## Snohomish Conservation District

### Board of Supervisors

Mark Craven, Chair

Adam Farnham, Vice-chair

Karl Hereth

Steve Van Valkenburg

Jeff Ellingsen

### Associate Members

Duane Weston

### District Manager

Monte Marti

Phone 425-335-5634

FAX 425-335-5024

Contact: Lois Ruskell  
[lois@snohomishcd.org](mailto:lois@snohomishcd.org)

425-377-7020

Editing: Donna Gleisner  
The Written Edge  
425-923-7110

[www.snohomishcd.org](http://www.snohomishcd.org)

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