

COLUMBIA

Wildfire Resource Recovery

Resource Challenges

- Resource & Landowner recovery from the 2005 School and 2006 Columbia Complex Fire impacts
- District ability to provide technical and financial assistance for at risk resource enhancement
- Cooperation and coordination between USDA, WSCC, Washington State Legislature, BPA, landowners (private and public) and Columbia Conservation District (CCD)

Project Summary

Landowners have been severely impacted by wildfires in Columbia County the last 2 years, (School Fire 2005 and Columbia Complex Fire 2006). In both cases, CCD with cooperation and support of Bonneville Power Administration was allowed to modify their Tucannon Model Watershed contract and commit funds for recovery efforts within the Tucannon subbasin. In response to landowner concerns/issues from the 2006 Columbia Complex Fire, multiple public meetings were held with representation from USDA-NRCS and FSA, District 16 Legislative representation, local county government entities, CCD and landowners/cooperators. As a result, CCD developed a recovery package proposal which included aerial and ground application for grass seeding, tree planting, and livestock control fencing that was presented to the Washington State Conservation Commission. Due to the scope and financial impact, WSCC presented this proposal package to the Governor's office and Legislature as a Supplemental Budget request. Funding was received split between biennium's; Phase I & II. USDA-FSA requested and received Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) funding in support of landowner recovery efforts, which helped alleviate the demand for state funding while providing full financial assistance to qualified cooperators on a programmatic base. Phase II is now in contracting with installation of recovery efforts to continue this biennium.

Project Results

Through coordinated efforts 3,115 acres were seeded; 35,000 trees planted; and 200,305 feet of livestock fence installed with Phase I funding. Efforts in Phase I will expedite resource recovery, enhance cooperator management options, and build on relationships between all parties involved as well as community perspectives of agency responsiveness to local needs.

State Legislative District #16
Congressional District #5

FEATURE ACCOMPLISHMENT

Two consecutive years of devastating fires! The School and Columbia Complex Fires impacted over 153,000 acres in Columbia County and put natural resources and the primary economic base (agriculture: crop, range, livestock & forestry) at risk.



57,000 lbs of grass seed ready for aerial seeding



More Information

Contact

Columbia Conservation District
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Key Partners Involved

Washington Legislature & 16th District Legislators
WA State Conservation Commission & Staff
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
USDA Farm Service Agency
Landowners/Cooperators
Bonneville Power Administration

Columbia CD Board of Supervisors

Skip Mead, Chair
Jim Hanger, Vice-Chair
David Carlton, Secretary
Clay Hutchens, Auditor
Byron Seney, Member

OTHER DISTRICT INFORMATION

Background

The Columbia Conservation District has been serving the citizens of Columbia County since its beginning on June 29, 1949. The District consists of 558,581 acres: 356,775 privately-owned cropland, pasture/rangeland, and forest; 187,811 acres publicly-owned lands; and 14,688 acres vacation/recreational, incorporated/residential, and other. The District includes two salmonid bearing watersheds: the Tucannon with four ESA listed species and the Upper Touchet, part of the Walla Walla, with two ESA listed species. The major industry is agriculture with recreational winter skiing and seasonal fishing and hunting.

Mission Statement

To provide the needed support to people who own, manage, or utilize the natural resources so their activities will enhance the region's natural resources while ensuring the quality of life and culture these resources provide.

Natural Resource Priorities and Goals

Soil Quantity:

By 2010 soil erosion shall be reduced to sustainable levels by definition of the Field Office Technical Guide that reflects local conditions.

Soil Quality:

By 2015 soil tests will show a positive increase in soil quality county-wide including change in organic matter, infiltration, biological activity, and nutrient balance.

Air Quality:

By 2010 there will be a decrease in air quality monitor activity of particulates by measurement.

Water Quality:

By 2010 there will be a decrease in sedimentation and water temperatures, an increase in flows, and by 2020 a 5-degree reduction in water temperature.

Forest & Range Management:

By 2020 all forest and range managers will have plans that address soil, water, air, plants, and animals.

Fish & Wildlife Habitat:

By 2010 assist land managers with having watershed management plans on-the-ground and working to improve fish & wildlife habitat.

Information – Education Priorities and Goals

By 2012 all citizens in Columbia CD will have been contacted through a District education event.

Critical Geographic Areas

Production Agriculture:

- District Boundaries
- Lower Whetstone area comprising burn Zone 12
- South of Highway 12 and North Touchet Road

Fish & Wildlife:

- Tucannon River corridor
- Upper Touchet River corridor

Natural Resources Information: More Work to Do

Cropland

- Minimal till practices are utilized on ~85% of crop ground, yet development of alternative crops and markets are needed to promote soil & water retention and organic quality.

Forest and Rangeland

- Restoration of fire ravished resources took place in 2007. Phase 2 will see efforts continued.



Fire - aerial seeded grass June 2007

Fish & Wildlife - Irrigation

- Six irrigation efficiencies projects installed in the Tucannon River Watershed with 10.469 cfs and 887.88 ac. ft. of water placed into trust for instream use. Six additional potential projects have been identified for plan development and installation.
- Installed 78 water withdrawal screens that meet current regulations, including meters. More withdrawal sites have been identified for screens and meters.

Livestock

- Eleven livestock BMP plans have been implemented with 13 currently in development. Farms are referred by WDOE as potential water quality concerns or by landowner wanting to be pro-active. BMP plans consist of fencing, water development, water run-off control, and grazing management. More are targeted annually as WDOE tours other areas of the county.

Riparian

- 101.5 miles riparian buffers have been installed with 201 miles of CREP eligible riparian remaining. Buffers consist of native plantings, livestock exclusion fencing and water system development.

