



Water Ways Newsletter

Spring 2007

CHELAN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT NEWS

301 Yakima Street, Room 307 Wenatchee, WA 98801 (509) 664-0275

Refusing Relinquishment: One Landowner Finds a Solution in State's Trust Water Rights Program

Dealing with water rights can be a tricky business. Having someone available who is familiar with water law, water policy and water rights transactions can prove to be an invaluable resource. A local non-regulatory, not-for-profit entity called the Washington Rivers Conservancy recently proved to be that resource for one local landowner.

While working with a group of residents in the Entiat River watershed on a surface to ground water conversion it became clear to Chelan County Conservation District personnel that a portion of one of the landowner's water right might be relinquished if steps were not taken to protect it. Because the landowner had taken some of his property out of orchard production, not all of his water right had been put to a beneficial use over the past few years. Under Washington State water law all of a water right must be put to a beneficial use within a five-year period or the "use it or lose it" rule applies and any unused portion of the water right may be inadvertently lost, or relinquished.



The landowner was interested in taking the steps necessary to protect his full water right. The Washington Rivers Conservancy worked with him to gather his water rights and historical water use documentation and put the unused portion of his right into the state Trust Water program. Washington State water laws permit the voluntary transfer of water from out-of-stream to instream uses on both a temporary and permanent basis. Once a qualifying transfer is

(Continued on page 3)

Burning Banned? Consider Composting

Spring in Chelan County means green hillsides, blossoming trees, and...piles of yard waste? Many of us have traditionally burned our yard waste, but recent changes in state regulations, seasonal burn bans, and research regarding the effects of outdoor burning on people and the environment have left us looking for an alternative solution. Chipping, curbside pickup, and hauling to designated disposal facilities are options for some of us, but composting is an option for ALL of us.



Your wallet, your garden, and your health can all benefit from composting. The savings can be seen in cutting curbside waste expenses, conserving gasoline by not driving to a transfer station and easing strain on current landfills. The addition of finished compost to your garden improves soil structure, reduces water loss, helps control weeds, and acts as a natural fertilizer and valuable mulch. This means your water bills may be lower and you may not need to buy costly soil additives. Additionally, composting does not contribute to harmful air pollution that can negatively affect you, your children and your neighbors. The sense of satisfaction in doing your part for Planet Earth is just an added bonus.

What is composting?

Composting is the natural process of decomposition, just faster. The speed comes when the ideal environment is created for bacteria,

(Continued on page 2)

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Got Trees?

Plan to attend the
Family Forest Owners Field Day



See page 3 for
more information...

Composting

(Continued from page 1)

fungi and microbes to do their work. This “ideal” environment is composed of five essential ingredients: heat, oxygen, water, nitrogen-rich or fresh *green* materials, and carbonaceous or dry *brown* materials.

Maintaining the balance of all five ingredients is essential to the success of a compost pile. The microorganisms powering a compost pile need carbon for energy and nitrogen for growth. As a general rule, equal amounts of nitrogen and carbon, or *green* and *brown* materials, should be added to a pile. *Green* materials include such things as manure, food scraps and grass clippings. Examples of *brown* materials include leaves, straw and wood chips.

Heat is generated naturally as the microorganisms diligently devour the waste—ideally reaching temperatures between 110-160°F! Regular turning of the compost infuses it with oxygen and helps to keep the feeding frenzy going. The materials added to the compost coupled with rain or a sprinkling from the garden hose contribute the moisture necessary for decomposition to occur.

How Do I Get Started?

Composting can be as simple or as involved as you would like. It all depends on how much yard waste or kitchen scraps you produce, how fast you want to see results, and how much effort you are willing to invest. You can begin by picking a site. Find a space in your yard where there is good air circulation, that is out of the full sun, easily accessible, and away from wooden structures that might be susceptible to rot.

Next, determine the best type of system for your composting needs and wants. A range of options exist including a basic pile, tumbler, wire pen, or single and multi-bin systems. Try to select a design that is user-friendly, permits adequate air ventilation, and is scavenger resistant. If you think your composting needs will increase in the future due to a growing family or garden then be sure to select a system that can be easily expanded.

After you have selected a system, you need to determine what type of composting method you are willing to commit to. Two commonly used methods include *cold* and *hot* composting. Pile temperatures and required labor are the main differences between the two methods.



“Finished” compost is ready for use when it turns a dark brown or black color, is crumbly in texture, and has a rich, earthy smell.

Cold composting, or add-as-you-go composting, is the least labor intensive and most popular method. It is well-suited for small households with moderate yard maintenance needs. Because temperatures generated in a cold composting pile are lower, decomposition is slower. Depending on climate, and pile conditions it can take several months to a year for finished compost to develop.

Hot composting, or batch composting, requires a little more planning and maintenance than cold composting, but the results are worth it. With hot composting you could have finished compost in as little as 1-3 months. This method works well for larger households with greater yard maintenance needs. Prior to beginning, *green* and *brown* materials must be stockpiled until you have enough to fill your bin. Temperatures reached during the hot composting process are higher and require a minimum pile size of approximately 3 ft x 3ft x 3ft to keep things going.

To Begin:

- Line an empty bin with about 3 inches of moistened, chopped or shredded coarse material such as twigs or straw, or plant stems for drainage and ventilation.
- Add materials as they become available (*cold* composting) or add stockpiled materials all at once (*hot* composting). Layer *green* and *brown* materials. Try to keep food scraps covered by a brown layer or finished compost from the bottom of the pile.
- Maintain moderate moisture and good air flow throughout bin. Turn once a week and add small amounts of water as needed. The moisture level of the pile should be that of a wrung-out sponge.
- Compost is “finished” and ready for use in your garden when it turns a dark brown or black color, is crumbly in texture and has a rich, earthy smell.

When conditions are favorable for plant growth they are also favorable for biological activity in a compost pile. As a result, the composting season coincides with the growing season. However, since decomposition generates heat, composting can continue into the fall and winter months. If the weather is too cool or you don't have a sufficient supply of nitrogen-rich or green material you can add an activator to your pile to keep things going. Some common activators are steer manure, alfalfa meal, coffee grounds or general lawn fertilizer. Commercial activators may also be purchased at your local garden center.



Do Compost...

Leaves
Grass Clippings
Chipped Twigs & Brush
Straw or Hay
Dead Plants
Fruit & Veggie Scraps
Egg Shells
Coffee Grounds
Manure

Do NOT Compost...

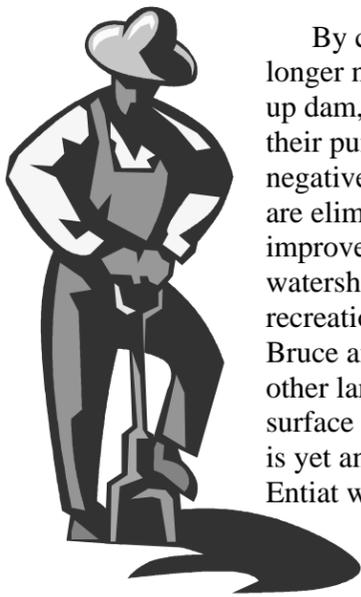
Bones
Meat or Fish
Dairy Products
Greasy Foods or Oils
Diseased Plants
Weeds Gone to Seed
Whole Branches or Logs
Human or Pet Waste
Ashes, Charcoal or Coal

(Continued on page 4)

Irrigators Go Underground for Fish

Three landowners in the lower Entiat River recently decided to “go underground” to help prevent potential harm to fish and improve their irrigation efficiency. With the assistance of the Chelan County Conservation District (CCCD), Bonneville Power Administration, Bureau of Reclamation, Chelan County Natural Resources Department, and Washington Rivers Conservancy the landowners replaced their surface water diversion with two irrigation wells. The new wells, installed last fall, will be their source of irrigation water this season and help to further Entiat River watershed fishery restoration efforts.

The landowners traditionally used a man-made rock push-up dam to divert water from the Entiat River to a settling area where a pump would draw the water into their irrigation systems. The rock push-up dam was successfully used for a number of years, but it required a good deal of annual maintenance and had the potential to adversely affect fish and other important aquatic species. The construction of such instream dams can create fish passage barriers, disturb aquatic insects, and damage salmon egg “nests”, or redds.



By converting to wells, the landowners no longer need to construct and maintain their push-up dam, or be concerned about sediment clogging their pumping system. In addition, the potential negative effects of the push-up dam on the river are eliminated. “We certainly support efforts to improve fish habitat; someday maybe the Entiat watershed will be healthy enough to support a recreational fishery”, say participating landowners Bruce and Sandy Wick. The effort they and two other landowners took to reduce the impact their surface water diversion may have had on the river is yet another example of how residents of the Entiat watershed are undertaking projects to meet human needs while working to improve the health of the watershed.

If you would like to learn more about how you can make your surface water diversion more fish-friendly contact the Conservation District at (509) 664-0275. A number of options exist including intake screening, upgrades or converting from a surface to ground water source. We have the expertise to help you evaluate the options, and can identify and possibly secure grant funding for your project.

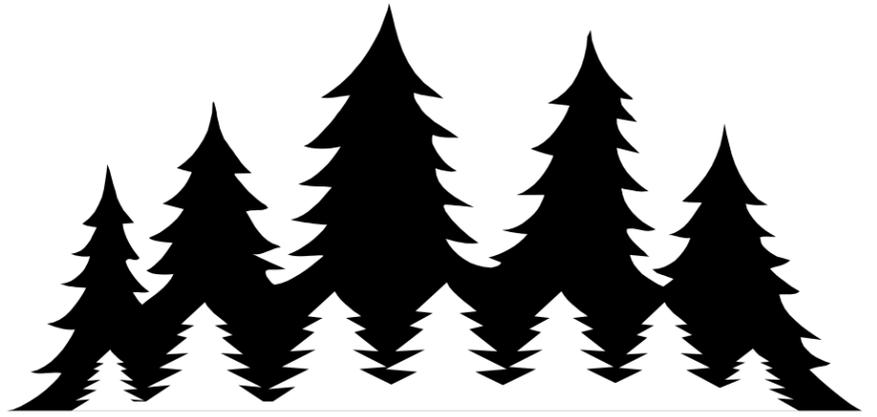
Trust Water Rights Program

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made into the program, the water right retains its original priority date and is protected from relinquishment until the owner is ready to use it again in the future.

Both landowners and streams benefit from the state Trust Water Right program. Landowners are able to retain the unused portion of their water rights for future use while fish and other aquatic species benefit from increased flows and cooler water temperatures. According to the Washington Rivers Conservancy website at www.warivers.org, “Increasing stream flow is critical for the recovery of species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, and improving water quality in rivers and streams listed as water quality impaired under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act.”

If you have stopped using part of your water right within the last five years, consider using the state Trust Water Right program as a way to protect the unused portion from relinquishment. For more information contact the Conservation District at (509) 664-0275 or the Washington Rivers Conservancy at (509) 888-0970.



Family Forest Owners Field Day

Whether you own a home in the woods or acres and acres of forest land, this educational event is for you! Learn how to assess the health of your forest and effectively manage your property. Participants can choose to attend up to six 45-minute programs that will be delivered throughout the day. Experienced professionals will be on hand to offer valuable advice on nearly two dozen popular topics including...

- common shrub and tree identification
- wildlife habitat enhancement
- forestry taxation
- FireWise landscaping
- Global Positioning Systems
- small-scale forestry and ATV logging
- cost-share opportunities
- and much, much more!

The program will be held from 9am to 4:30 pm on Saturday, June 23 outside of Cle Elum. The registration fee is \$20 for one person or \$30 for two or more people if registered before June 17. After June 17, the fee is \$30 for one person and \$40 for two or more people. Bring the whole family— nature games and activities will be offered throughout the day for the kids. A tasty BBQ lunch will also be available on-site for \$7 to benefit the Ellensburg Future Farmers of America.

Plan to attend and join the more than 5,000 forest owners across Washington and Idaho who’ve already benefited from these events. For more information or to obtain a registration brochure contact WSU Extension Forester Andy Perleberg at (509) 667-6540 or visit <http://ext.nrs.wsu.edu/newsevents/forststewardship.htm>.



Participants in the Family Forest Owner’s Field Day learn to measure trees in an effort to analyze forest health risks.

Plant Sale a Big Success Help Us Plan for Next Year

This year the plant sale included a variety of native plants in addition to the steadfast Ponderosa pine. More than 12,000 plants were distributed to just over 100 customers. Thank you to all of our supporters for making our project a success, and for helping Chelan County's landscape to flourish!

If there is a particular species you'd like to see on next year's list, please contact us. The earlier we reserve the plants from our supplier, the more likely we can get them. The plants we will have available next year are being grown right now – so it's important to plan ahead to get the best selection. Help us meet your planting needs for next year. Call Valerie at 664-0272 with your requests and suggestions.

Chelan County
Conservation District
extends a big
Thank You to



for providing cooler space and staff assistance in support of our annual Plant Sale. Special thanks to Lester Sickles in receiving, along with Amber, Kip, and the forklift crew for their cheerful help.

We'd also like to thank volunteers extraordinaire Mike Brogan, Phylisha Olin and Jeff Hampton for their valuable assistance.

Composting

(Continued from page 2)

Troubleshooting

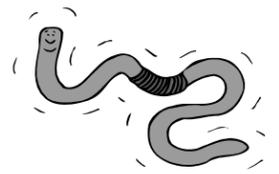
Many common composting problems can be avoided by maintaining the correct balance of heat, oxygen, water, nitrogen and carbon. The symptoms, causes and solutions for three common composting problems are discussed below.

Problem	Symptom or Cause	Solution
Compost pile not heating up	<u>Too wet</u> : compost soggy and oxygen deficient	Turn pile, add more dry materials.
	<u>Too dry</u> : not enough water	Add enough water to moisten.
Pile is smelly	<u>Ammonia</u> : too much <i>green</i> (nitrogen) material in pile	Add dry <i>brown</i> (carbon) materials and turn pile.
	<u>Rotten Smell</u> : too much water and not enough oxygen	Turn pile and add dry <i>brown</i> (carbon) materials
Scavengers	<u>Rodents and/or Raccoons</u> : food scraps not buried deep enough and/or pile isn't covered	Bury food scraps and cover with a dry <i>brown</i> (carbon) layer. Turn pile and cover with lid.
	<u>Flies and/or Gnats</u> : food scraps not buried deep enough and/or pile isn't covered	Bury food scraps and cover with a dry <i>brown</i> (carbon) layer. Turn pile and cover with lid.

Resources

There are a number of great books and articles about composting out there. Resources used to develop this article include...

- Whatcom County- Washington State University Cooperative Extension website at www.whatcom.wsu.edu,
- Spokane Regional Solid Waste System website at www.solidwaste.org,
- *Home Composting Made Easy* written by C. Forrest McDowell, PhD and Tricia Clark-McDowell and published by Cortesia Press www.cortesia.org,
- *The Rodale Book of Composting* edited by Deborah L. Martin and Grace Gershuny and published by Rodale Press www.rodale.com.



Thank you to District volunteer Phylisha Olin for her research and contribution to this article.



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301 Yakima Street, Room 307
 Wenatchee, WA 98801
 Phone: (509) 664-0275 Fax: (509) 664-0255

CCCD Staff

Peggy Entzel, *District Administrator* (509) 664-0266
 Valerie Hampton, *Administrative Assistant* (509) 664-0272
 Nada Wentz, *Office Assistant* (509) 664-0275
 Michael Rickel, *Program Manager* (509) 664-0268
 Sarah M. Walker, *Resource Specialist 2* (509) 664-0271
 Kurt Hosman, *Resource Specialist* (509) 664-0270
 Sarah Rudback, *Resource Specialist* (509) 664-0274
 Richard Malinowski, *Project Coordinator* (509) 664-0213