

Natural Resources Conservation Service

CONSERVATION footprints

*A quarterly publication by, for,
and about NRCS-WA employees.*

The People's Garden Program

*By Pamela Pavek, Conservation Agronomist,
Pullman Plant Materials Center and Washington
People's Garden Coordinator*

Have you ever wondered how you could share your knowledge about gardening, agriculture, and conservation with people in your community whom NRCS doesn't normally serve? Have you thought about how your NRCS office could interact more with students, senior citizens, and low-income or other under-served groups? Have you ever day dreamed about getting away from the computer for a while? There is a USDA program that will help you to achieve all of these goals. It is the People's Garden Program.

The People's Garden Program was initiated by USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack in 2009 as a way to connect USDA agency offices with their communities, provide educational opportunities, and supply food for local food

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*Pollinator Garden at the
St. Andrew's Community Garden in Ellensburg, WA*

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A Message from Roylene



We are finishing up another successful year of getting conservation on the ground.

What a feeling of accomplishment to know that we are helping protect the natural resources of Washington State.

At the end of 2014 NRCS can report that conservation was applied to 301,187 acres of cropland to protect soil, and that irrigation efficiency was improved on 22,369 acres. 187,865 acres of grazing and forestland were also protected through conservation efforts. This is just a snapshot of the work that you have done in Washington State in 2014. Congratulations on a job well done.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.



The People's Garden Program

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Flowers add beauty and attract pollinators to any garden. Plant a pollinator-friendly garden or window box to show your support for pollinators.

banks. He named the program "People's Gardens" in honor of President Lincoln who founded the USDA in 1862 and called it the "People's Department." People's Gardens are often operated by partnerships between USDA agencies and organizations such as Conservation Districts, community groups, churches, schools, and colleges or universities. Gardens can range in size from a few containers of tomato plants outside of an office, to a small plot of wildflowers for pollinators, or a large community garden that produces vegetables for charities.

To be considered as part of the People's Garden Program, the garden must meet three requirements. It must: 1) benefit the community, 2) be collaborative, and 3) incorporate sustainable practices.

Since the beginning of the People's Garden Program in 2009, People's Gardens around the country have donated 3.9 million pounds of vegetables to local food banks and senior centers. There are now 2,116 People's Gardens in all 50 states and three territories, and partnerships with 1,300 entities. In Washington, there are 32 People's Gardens. Nine are located at USDA facilities (such as Forest Service offices), and three are operated in partnership with NRCS. These are the Pollinator Garden in Wenatchee (started by Amy Hendershot), the Pollinator Garden at St. Andrew's Community Garden in Ellensburg (started by Erin Kreutz) and the Pollinator Habitat Demonstration Planting at the Pullman PMC (started by myself).

Every Field Office in Washington is encouraged by the USDA and NRCS to have their own People's Garden, and

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The People's Garden Program

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NRCS has a policy which allows Field Offices to contribute time and materials to People's Garden efforts. Being part of the People's Garden Program has many benefits, including access to educational materials, logistical guidance, signs, and the opportunity for partner organizations to apply for grants. If you are interested in starting a People's Garden, talk to your supervisor, then meet with your partner organizations and develop a plan. As your state People's Garden Coordinator, I can assist you by providing a copy of the NRCS policy, organizational and promotional materials, and other support. In addition, the Pullman Plant Materials Center can provide plant materials and technical advice.

The People's Garden program offers a unique opportunity for us to get outside away from our computers, contribute to our communities in a positive way and demonstrate conservation practices. Let's increase the number of People's Gardens in Washington and our presence in local communities!

Visit the [People's Garden website](#) for more information or contact Pamela Pavek, pamela.pavek@wa.usda.gov, 509-335-6894.

Soil Health Committee

By Kevin Sullivan, State Soil Scientist

The Washington State Soil Health Committee brings together agricultural producers and businesses, soil scientists, and state and federal conservation agencies to promote soil health throughout the state. The committee advocates for soil health by educating landowners and citizens about current best practices in preventing soil erosion and enhancing soil health on arable lands. The committee also works with producers and state and federal agencies to remove existing barriers to sustainable practices.

To accomplish these goals, the committee is creating a website for sharing information among landowners, scientists, public agencies, and private entities. Members travel throughout the state to attend relevant organization

meetings and conferences to distribute information about soil health. An early effort will be to conduct a data search for (1) work accomplished in other states, (2) existing cover cropping in Washington State, and (3) stories and testimonials from early adopters of no-till practices. The committee is also working on defining a 2014 baseline for cover crops and setting goals to increase that by 2017.

Currently, the committee meets by telephone conference once a month. In-person meetings and attendance at trade conferences are planned, depending on availability of travel funds.



Congratulations on your Promotion!

Daniel Ufnar, promoted to the Soil Survey Party Leader, in the Olympia Soil Survey Office, effective 11/2/14.

Goodbye and Good Luck to the Following Employees:

Ciara Ahrens, Soil Conservation Technician in the Ephrata Field Office, transferred/promoted to NRCS/CO effective 09/20/14.

Leigh Nelson, Irrigation Technician in the Ephrata Area Office, transferred/promoted to NRCS/AR effective 11/2/14.

Nick Vira, District Conservationist in the Chehalis Field Office, transferred/promoted to NRCS/MN effective 11/2/14.

Kim Galland, Soil Conservationist in the Ritzville Field Office, transferred/promoted to NRCS/OR effective 11/16/14.

Linda Mycek, Soil Conservation Technician in the Davenport Field Office, appointment expired effective 11/16/14.

Jeff Knutson, Soil Conservationist in the Davenport Field Office, resigned effective 12/12/14.

Welcome New Employees:

Jeffrey Jones, Soil Conservationist in the Davenport Field Office, effective 11/2/14.

Justin Ross, Soil Conservationist in the Ellensburg Field Office, effective 11/30/14.

Allen Casey, promoted to Plant Material Manager in the Pullman Office, Allen was previously with NRCS/MO, effective 11/30/14.

Kerzman Receives Visionary Leadership Award from AIANEA



Kerzman, far right. Other members pictured who received awards include (L-R) Pam Crow, TX, Special Recognition Award for Outstanding Service; Melissa Sturdivant, TX, Outstanding Member Award and President's Award; and Tanya Meyer Dideriksen, IA, President's Award.

Gina Kerzman, Public Affairs Officer in Spokane, WA, was awarded the Visionary Leadership Award from the American Indian Alaska Native Employee's Association (AIANEA) in November at the national conference that took place in Atmore, Alabama on the Poarch Band of Creek Indians Reservation.

The purpose of the AIANEA Visionary Leadership Award is to acknowledge an individual who, either on an annual or multi-year basis has significantly advanced the Association's mission through extraordinary accomplishment, example, and vision. The award signifies the promise of continued success of the AIANEA, made possible through the inspiration and positive contributions of the member.

Gina was nominated by fellow association members. She received a hand woven honeysuckle basket made by a member of the Poarch Band Creek Tribe.

Learn about Disability Awareness in Aglearn

Submitted by Kathleen Dickerson, Human Resources Assistant



Where can an employee update their Disability profile?

Did you know you can take all sorts of wonderful courses in Aglearn? I know we are inundated with training lately and you probably do not want to go into the website or maybe do not have the time for additional training right now? However, when you get time, you really should. I mention this because I talked to an employee the other day about Aglearn being a great source for training, specifically training about Disabilities. He reminded me people have disabilities that are visible, but there is an amazing amount of people walking around with a disability you cannot see. He shared his disability with me and how he used Aglearn to learn more about USDA policy and Disability Awareness.

I want to thank this employee for sharing their experience with me. Because of that conversation I learned all about Addison's disease. If you are curious about this disease you can click on [this website](#) to learn more.

"I've come to discover that I have a disability, according to ADA Amendments Act. I, like most, think of disability as something you see when you look at someone. So I never thought of what I have as a disability, but I have learned I was so wrong. I guess these trainings are a good thing, even though I think some people complain about them too much."

His question was whether he should update his profile to reflect the disability? Absolutely, employees should update their disability, military or ethnicity status to reflect changes or incorrect data. How do you know if you have the incorrect data? Access the secure site of the [National Finance Center Employee Personal Page](#) (NFC/EPP). NFC/EPP Self-Service is the best site to correct or update any of your personal information: Disability, Ethnicity, Pay, Health and more.

If you have any questions after reviewing NFC/EPP or your Statement of Earnings and Leave, please do not hesitate to call Human Resources Office,

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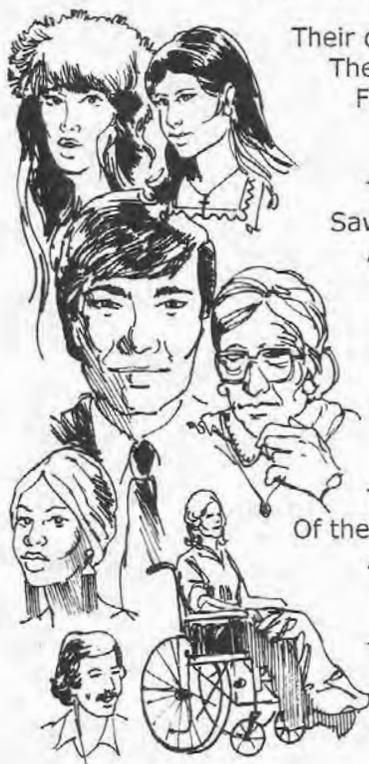
The Cold Within, a poem for Civil Rights

Submitted by Patrice Beckwith, District Conservationist

Four members of the WA State Civil Right Committee, Bob Jarret, Erin Kreutz, Jenny Johnston and Patrice Beckwith, recently attended a mandatory EEO Training for Federal Employees.

The training discussed federal policy, laws, hiring practices and how they affect our employee structure. The training was very well received by all participants. This poem was given to each participant as a memento of the course.

Six humans trapped by happenstance
In bleak and bitter cold,
Each one possessed a stick of wood
Or so the story's told.



Their dying fire in need of logs
The first woman held hers back
For of the faces around the fire
She noticed one was black.

The next man looking cross the way
Saw one not of his church,
And couldn't bring himself to give
The fire his stick of birch.

The third one sat in tattered clothes
He gave his coat a hitch.
Why should his log be put to use
To warm the idle rich.

The rich man just sat back and thought
Of the wealth he had in store.
And how to keep what he had earned
From the lazy shiftless poor.

The black man's face bespoke revenge
As the fire passes from his sight.
For all he saw in his stick of wood
Was a chance to spite the white.

And the last man of this forlorn group
Did naught except for gain,
Giving only to those who gave
Was how he played the game.

Their logs held tight in death's still hands
Was proof of human sin.
They didn't die from the cold without
They died from the cold within.

Jay Patrick Kinney

Disability Awareness, continued from page 4

so your questions can be directed to the appropriate staff member. And remember, all of us are dealing with some sort of challenges, whether visible or not. Take the time to become informed, and be kind and tolerant to one another as you interact with your co-workers and your customers.

Have Your Own Conservation Success Story?



Our successes do not end when we implement a conservation plan. An important aspect of conservation success includes "showing-and-telling" the work we've accomplished. "Highlights in Conservation" is a quick submission process which will help facilitate capturing our accomplishments, like those above. Download the [submission form](#).

We hope you have enjoyed the employee submitted articles highlighted in this issue of Conservation Footprints. Please feel free to [submit your comments](#), suggestions and/or new articles for an up-coming issue of this newsletter.

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