

## *School gardens in Longview/Kelso set to grow even more*

Cowlitz County Health Department's (CCHD) Office of Healthy Communities received \$250,000 over the next three years to partner with Lower Columbia School Gardens and the Longview and Kelso School Districts to increase fruit and vegetable consumption for school-age children. This collaborative project will expand access to school garden activities and curricula for children and their families.

This grant will allow Lower Columbia School Gardens to expand their capacity to serve more children in our county through their 14 school-based gardens, and to integrate their programs and activities more fully into the school environment. Longview and Kelso School Districts will be able to fully utilize school gardens as an educational and community resource.



Happy Lower Columbia School Gardens student.

"We are grateful to Kaiser Permanente for this opportunity to engage even more kids in our school gardens. We know that school gardens work; kids are more likely to eat and enjoy fruit and vegetables they grow themselves, and they get excited about healthy cooking and eating as they learn about where real food comes from and how it's grown. We see that reality in our work every day, and this new partnership will allow us to share that experience with more children, teachers and families in our community," says Ian Thompson, Executive Director of Lower Columbia School Gardens.



Kaiser Permanente Northwest is dedicated to improving the health of individuals and the communities they serve. Specifically, their work is focused on connecting low-income people to health care, educating children and families about healthy eating and active living, creating and sharing groundbreaking research, strengthening health safety nets in communities, and supporting their employees' community engagement.

## *Attention growers: WSDA Drought Economic Impact Study*

WSDA is seeking ranchers and farmers participation via survey on the impacts of the recent drought.

WSDA has set up a survey to ask growers about drought impacts from the 2015 drought. The short 13 question survey should only take 2-5 minutes to complete and asks about

drought impacts on yield, quality, and other factors. The survey is anonymous and will only capture regional location as well as commodity groupings, it will not include any other identifier, protecting participant identity. This information will be used to characterize the drought impacts throughout the state in 2015.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2015drought>

In addition to the grower survey, the study will focus on qualitative and quantitative data that is currently available regarding agricultural impacts from the 2015 drought. A second more in depth report will be completed next year, when NASS data is available. The data WSDA collects will be used to prepare an economic assessment of this year's drought and better target future drought funding and support.



Washington  
State Department of  
Agriculture

**Stay in contact and sign up for the OFP-Newsletter!**

Email frequency is once a month

Sign up on the web at: <http://ofp.scc.wa.gov>

## *Cascadia Grains Conference - Olympia, January 9*

THE CASCADIA GRAINS CONFERENCE brings together farmers, processors and end-users, as well as investors, brokers and local government officials to support rebuilding a grain economy west of the Cascade Mountains in Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia through three value-added enterprises – brewing and distilling, baking and other food uses, as well as animal feed.



Western Washington wheat - Image: WSU

The 4th Cascadia Grains Conference will be held at the South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia, WA on **Saturday, January 9th, 2016**.

Registration and schedule available by going to: <http://cascadiagrains.com/>

## *King CD Regional Food System Grants Awarded*

As part of the King Conservation District (KCD) Regional Food System Program, KCD initiated a new grant fund to support projects that strengthen our local food economy. Our goals are to bridge the gap between producers and consumers, and to serve as a catalyst in making local food production both environmentally and economically sustainable.



**KCD recently awarded the first round of Regional Food System Grants totaling \$663,878.**

Recipients included Nelli Farms, Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment, Northwest Agriculture Business Center, Highline College, SnoValley Tilth, King County Agriculture Program, Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance, Washington State University, and HumanLinks Foundation/21 Acres. See the King CD website for details on the KCD Regional Food System Program.

The KCD Regional Food System Grant Program is based on action plans of the King County Local Food Initiative and the Puget Sound Regional Food Policy Council. The program funds food system-related projects with demonstrated public benefit and a link to improving working lands in King County. The program is designed to support projects that contribute to the economic viability of local farmers, encourage new farmers, expand acreage in food production, improve food access, and increase demand for King County farm products.

More information about the grant awards and eligibility, go to: <http://goo.gl/w7eM2m>

## *WA Farm Internship Pilot Project Info Session and Q&A - Jan 19*

Thinking about hiring interns on your farm for the upcoming season? Don't miss the opportunity to enroll your farm in the Small Farms Internship Pilot Project (FIP). Washington Farms in Chelan, Grant, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Kittitas, Lincoln, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Spokane, Thurston, Whatcom, and Yakima counties, with annual sales of less than \$250,000, are eligible to apply. This program, directed by Washington Department of Labor and Industries, allows up to three interns (paid, stipend or unpaid) to work on a farm to learn about farming practices. The [FIP applications](#) are available on the [Washington State Department of Labor and Industries website](#).



On January 19th, join L&I Farm Internship Program Manager Kelly Kane, as well as Early Bird Farm Owner Rawley Johnson, for a brief presentation of how the program works, and how you can take advantage of it.

Please register here - <http://goo.gl/WjE1aR>

## *Whole Foods: Bellingham Meet and Greet for Local Producers*

Whole Foods Market is preparing to open a store in Bellingham, WA. As part of that process, they're looking to meet new Washington producers, learn about their products, and consider featuring them in stores.

On **Thursday, February 18, 2016**, they will host two meet-and-greet sessions at the Four Points by Sheraton (formerly a Best Western).

**Business Names Starting A-L:** Please attend the morning session, beginning promptly at 9 a.m. (please do not arrive early). People will not have specific appointment times, but Whole Foods Market team members will speak with everyone in the order they arrive and check in.

**Business Names Starting M-Z:** Please attend the afternoon session, beginning promptly at 1 p.m. (please do not arrive later than 2 p.m.). People will not have specific appointment times, but Whole Foods Market team members will speak with everyone in the order they arrive and check in.

All products sold at Whole Foods Market must meet strict Quality Standards including to be free from all artificial preservatives, additives, colorings and flavorings.

Please review Quality Standards prior to registering. <http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/about-our-products/quality-standards>

**When:** Thursday, February 18, 2016 from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

**Where:** Four Points by Sheraton - 714 Lakeway Drive Bellingham, WA 98229 - [View Map](#)



## *General Enrollment for CRP ends February 26*



Funding Available for Conservation and Restoration on Agricultural Land

**Deadline February 26**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack reminds farmers and ranchers that enrollment for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is open until Feb. 26, 2016. This December marks the 30th anniversary of CRP, a federally funded program that assists agricultural producers with the cost of restoring, enhancing and protecting certain grasses, shrubs and trees to improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.

You can see the full news release [here](#).

## *PCC Farmland Trust Farmland Access Survey*

PCC Farmland Trust is conducting a [study](#) to gauge community interest in a new **agriculture park**, which would be home to a number of small parcels of farmland in close proximity available for lease. They are looking for feedback about the needs of the farming community and want to hear from you.

The agricultural park would aim to:

- Increase land access and affordability
- Facilitate access to technical assistance
- Capitalize on infrastructure-sharing and opportunities for collaboration
- Offer a lower-risk opportunity for farmers to start their own businesses



Please [click here](#) to share your thoughts! Be sure to include your contact information at the end of the survey in order to receive updates from us about this project moving forward. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/37VTVND>

## ***Columbia County orchardist fined for illegal irrigation during drought***

DAYTON – A Columbia County orchardist illegally watered a 100-acre apple and pear orchard after being ordered to stop irrigating during Washington’s historic drought.

The Washington Department of Ecology required 67 irrigators to stop irrigating in July and August 2015 to help save water for endangered fish and farmers with more senior rights to the water.

Warren Orchards continued to irrigate at night, and will pay \$73,530 for illegally using more than 90-acre-feet of water from the Touchet River. Ecology staff witnessed owner and operator Robert Warren illegally irrigating his orchard at night on Aug. 18 after having received the cease order.

Warren was issued a second order on Aug. 22 to disconnect the power to irrigation pumps and provide his water meter data to Ecology. Metering data showed that Warren illegally diverted water from the Touchet River over a period of 44 days, impairing other irrigators who had rights to the water.

Warren’s illegal water use also reduced the flow of the Touchet River for nearly 50 miles, which provides critical habitat for threatened steelhead.

Warren can appeal the penalty and order to the Pollution Control Hearings Board within 30 days.

## ***WA Wildlife and Recreation Program Review Report Complete***

At the Legislature’s request, per 2EHB 1115 Section 3163, the Recreation and Conservation Office has completed a review of the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) and made recommendations for statutory and policy revisions.

The review involved input from over 600 individuals, including Legislators, stakeholders, Tribal members, and WWRP project sponsors, and a report has been prepared that describes the process, what was heard during the review and recommendations for revisions to the program. **Learn More:** <http://www.rco.wa.gov/WWRP-Review.shtml>

All links below are for PDF documents.

- [Final Report with Appendices A-C](#)
- [Appendix A: Proposed and Current Allocations at Different Funding Levels](#)
- [Appendix B: Current WWRP Formula](#)
- [Appendix C: WWRP Background and History of Investments](#)
- [Appendix D: Map and List of WWRP Funded Projects](#)
- [Appendix E: Summary of RCO Survey](#)
- [Appendix F: Statement of Need](#)
- [Appendix G: Review of Public Access to WWRP Acquisitions](#)
- [Appendix H: Review Process Participants](#)

## ***Grant Opportunity: Verle Kaiser Conservation Endowment***

Washington State University and University of Idaho are soliciting proposals to the Verle Kaiser Conservation Endowment for promotion and demonstration of conservation practices targeting soil erosion. Proposals are sought for training college and K-12 students and constituents, including curriculum development, field trips, teaching aids, audio/visual, or other educational-related activities. Funds are open to Washington State University, University of Idaho, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Conservation Districts, and colleges in Washington and Idaho.

Learn more by going to: <http://goo.gl/i5TC3b> - Proposals are due January 8, 2016.

## *Grants*

### **Grant: Organic Farming Research Foundation Grants Program**

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) grants program is currently accepting research proposals. OFRF encourages farmers, ranchers, graduate students, early career researchers, veterans, and Extension personnel to consider applying. OFRF will fund projects up to \$15k for one year. Projects addressing the priority area of soil health and water management are eligible for \$20k to be spent over two years.

Details: <http://goo.gl/KKM6N2>

**Proposals due February 8, 2016.**

### **Grant: Fresh, Local & Equitable: Food as a Creative Platform for Neighborhood Revitalization**

This Kresge Foundation funding opportunity is designed to support food-oriented initiatives that contribute to economic revitalization, cultural expression, and health in low-income communities. Organizations and collaborations that lead food-oriented development initiatives in economically distressed urban neighborhoods are eligible.

Learn more by going to: <http://goo.gl/F8Y0ID>

**Proposals due January 15, 2016.**

### **Grant: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program**

NIFA requests applications to support the delivery of education, mentoring, and technical assistance programs to help beginning farmers and ranchers with entering, establishing, building, and managing successful farm and ranch enterprises. The recipient must be a collaborative, State, tribal, local, or regionally based network or partnership of public or private entities.

Details here: <http://goo.gl/4FofpQ>

**Applications are due Jan 21, 2016.**

## *USDA Announces Farm to School Program Grants*

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced \$4.8 million in grants for 74 projects spanning 39 states that support the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) efforts to connect child nutrition programs with local farmers and ranchers through its Farm to School Program.

USDA's Farm to School Grants fund school districts, state and local agencies, tribal nations, agricultural producers, and non-profit organizations in their efforts to increase local foods served through child nutrition programs, teach children about food and agriculture through garden and classroom education, and develop schools' and farmers' capacities to participate in farm to school. Awards ranging from \$20,000 to \$100,000 are distributed in four different grant categories: Planning, Implementation, Support Service, and Training.

Washington was awarded \$365,214 for four projects. For a complete list of Grant recipients, please see the [2016 Farm to School Grants summary page](#). Washington begins on PDF page 23.

## *New paper explores the role of Ag in sequestering carbon*

As the climate continues to warm, agriculture has a critical role to play in not just reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, but also in pulling GHG's out of the atmosphere and storing them in the soil.

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and Breakthrough Strategies and Solutions, LLC, recently published a paper that explores how soil carbon is sequestered, the state of soil carbon research, and the debate on its potential. It offers a set of recommendations for ongoing research and highlights the many co-benefits of increasing soil carbon.

The paper points to the Conservation Reserve Program, which pays producers to set land aside for 10-to-15 years rather than cropping that land. It also points to the Sodsaver program, which reduces the incentives caused by federal subsidies for tilling formerly uncropped land, such as native prairie.

The paper also briefly explores the co-benefits associated with increasing soil carbon, including maintaining soil structure, improving soil water retention, fostering healthy soil microbial communities, and providing fertility for crops.

**The full paper is available for download here:** <http://goo.gl/Y8uTsA>



## ***FDA requests comments on the use of the term “natural”***

### **The FDA requests comments on use of the term “natural” on food labeling.**

Because of the changing landscape of food ingredients and production, and in direct response to consumers who have requested that the FDA explore the use of the term “natural,” the agency is asking the public to provide information and comments on the use of this term in the labeling of human food products.



The FDA is taking this action in part because it received three Citizen Petitions asking that the agency define the term “natural” for use in food labeling and one Citizen Petition asking that the agency prohibit the term “natural” on food labels. We also note that some Federal courts, as a result of litigation between private parties, have requested administrative determinations from the FDA regarding whether food products containing ingredients produced using genetic engineering or foods containing high fructose corn syrup may be labeled as “natural.”

Although the FDA has not engaged in rulemaking to establish a formal definition for the term “natural,” they do have a longstanding policy concerning the use of “natural” in human food labeling. The FDA has considered the term “natural” to mean that nothing artificial or synthetic (including all color additives regardless of source) has been included in, or has been added to, a food that would not normally be expected to be in that food. However, this policy was not intended to address food production methods, such as the use of pesticides, nor did it explicitly address food processing or manufacturing methods, such as thermal technologies, pasteurization, or irradiation. The FDA also did not consider whether the term “natural” should describe any nutritional or other health benefit.

The FDA is accepting public comments from November 12, 2015 through February 10, 2016.

Submit comments by going to: <http://goo.gl/dJkDB7>

## ***Federal Ag Easement Program cutoff - January 15***

Agricultural Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced the availability of \$350 million to help landowners protect and restore key farmlands, grasslands and wetlands across the nation.

Funding is provided through the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). The program was created by the 2014 Farm Bill to protect critical water resources and wildlife habitat, and encourage private landowners to maintain land for farming and ranching. Through the voluntary sale of an easement, landowners limit future development to protect these key resources.

Washington's share of the \$350 million is not determined as of yet. The application cutoff for 2016 funding has been set for January 15, 2016. **Please direct any questions to Dave Kreft at 509-323-2991 or email Dave at [Dave.kreft@wa.usda.gov](mailto:Dave.kreft@wa.usda.gov).** Application materials are available on the NRCS-WA website. <http://goo.gl/pW6VQA>

## ***Yakima Basin Integrated Plan Bill Advances in the Senate***

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), ranking member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, secured the votes to advance her bill, S. 1694, the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Phase III Act, which addresses long-standing water challenges in Washington’s Yakima River Basin. The bill builds on existing legislation and authorizes the initial phase of a integrated water resources plan that aims to enhance the long-term sustainability and resilience of the Yakima River Basin.

The senator’s bill would benefit farmers, families and fish. First, the bill would support drought relief and resilience for farmers and communities in one of Washington’s most productive agricultural regions, through improved water infrastructure, storage and conservation. The bill would also support efforts to conserve 85,000 acre feet of water, as well as the restoration of habitat and ecosystems throughout the Yakima Basin. This includes fish passage and restoration projects that would restore one of the largest sockeye salmon runs in the lower 48 states that has been blocked for more than a century.



Learn more by going to: <http://goo.gl/IWC4eR>

# WASHINGTON STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

## Mark Your Calendars

<p><b>8th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference - Madison, WI June 2-4, 2016</b></p> <p>Save the date! for the 8th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference, a biennial event hosted by the National Farm to School Network that will convene more than 1,500 people working to source local food for institutional cafeterias and foster a culture of food and agricultural literacy across America.</p> <p><b>Details:</b> <a href="http://goo.gl/T1nCKE">http://goo.gl/T1nCKE</a></p>	<p><b>Save the Date! Women in Agriculture Conference WA, OR, ID - March 19, 2016</b></p> <p>This years <a href="#">Women in Agriculture Conference</a> takes place at several locations across WA, OR and ID.</p> <p><b>More Info:</b> <a href="http://goo.gl/8vNbem">http://goo.gl/8vNbem</a></p> <p>Please email <a href="mailto:donna.rolen@wsu.edu">donna.rolen@wsu.edu</a> (or call 509.745.8531) for updates on our 2016 conference on March 19.</p>	<p><b>Registration Open for Winter Farm Law Education Series</b></p> <p><a href="#">Farm Commons</a> has eight new tutorials in their <a href="#">Farm Law Education Series</a> as well as eight roundtable sessions, all designed to help you build a strong and resilient farm business.</p> <p>Click for the schedule and to register. <a href="http://goo.gl/qWaKpw">http://goo.gl/qWaKpw</a></p>
<p><b>WAFLA Workforce Summit January 28, Central Washington University Student Union Building</b></p> <p>Forward thinking companies are investing in their workforce. This includes utilizing the Legal Worker Program™. The Workforce Summit focuses on how seasonal employers can best utilize the federal H-2A program to attract a legal and stable workforce. and Much, much more!</p> <p><b>Details at:</b> <a href="http://goo.gl/JzAacS">http://goo.gl/JzAacS</a></p>	<p><b>Whole Foods Local Producer Meet and Greet, Bellingham, WA</b></p> <p>Thursday, February 18 - 9AM – 4PM,</p> <p>Whole Foods is looking for local producers to stock the shelves of their new store in Bellingham.</p> <p>Sign up here to reserve your session: <a href="https://goo.gl/arL2SC">https://goo.gl/arL2SC</a></p>	<p><b>WA State Farm Internship Pilot Project Info Session and Q&amp;A</b></p> <p>Tuesday, January 19: Tacoma - <a href="#">Centro Latino, 1208 S 10th Street</a>, 6 – 8 PM,</p> <p>Join L&amp;I Farm Internship Program Manager Kelly Kane, as well as Early Bird Farm Owner Rawley Johnson, for a brief presentation of how the program works, and how you can take advantage of it.</p> <p>Register here. <a href="http://goo.gl/WjE1aR">http://goo.gl/WjE1aR</a></p>
<p><b>Save the Date! Skagit Summit March 3 &amp; 4, 2016</b></p> <p><b>Location:</b> Best Western Plus Skagit Valley Inn - Mount Vernon, WA.</p> <p><b>More details to come!</b></p> <p><b>Topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulations</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Water and Irrigation</li> <li>• Labor</li> <li>• Current Issues</li> <li>• Public Policy and Rule Making</li> </ul>	<p><b>U.S. House Committee on Agriculture hearing - Wednesday, Dec 9, 2:00 p.m. EST</b></p> <p>The House Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research will be holding a public Hearing Dec 9.</p> <p>RE: Oversight of USDA’s use of Census of Agriculture authority to acquire farmer’s personal financial information</p> <p>Learn more at: <a href="http://goo.gl/DFBLjH">http://goo.gl/DFBLjH</a></p>	<p><b>USDA Value Added Producer Grant Boot Camp Tuesday, Jan 26, 2016 Skagit County Fairgrounds</b></p> <p>Workshop Registration Fee: \$25.00</p> <p>Refreshments and lunch will be provided. Register at: <a href="#">VAPG Boot Camp</a></p> <p>Scholarships are available for those in need. Please contact Jeff Voltz, <a href="mailto:jeff@agbizcenter.org">jeff@agbizcenter.org</a></p> <p><b>Learn more by going to:</b> <a href="http://goo.gl/IKFEH4">http://goo.gl/IKFEH4</a></p>

“OUR MISSION IS TO PROMOTE THE VITALITY OF FARMING, FARMERS, AND RANCHERS BY ENSURING THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURAL LANDS IN WASHINGTON STATE. WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS THROUGH POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNOR, THE LEGISLATURE, THE OFFICE OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION AND OTHERS AND BY ENLISTING PUBLIC SUPPORT. PROGRAMS WILL BE VOLUNTARY, RECOGNIZE LOCAL PRIORITIES, AND PROVIDE FOR ECONOMIC INCENTIVES.”