

In Balance

A Newsletter for the Whatcom County Dairy Industry



NRCS Will Accept 2004 Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Applications Until February 1st



Cost share funds enabled over 100,000 feet of high pressure underground pipeline to be installed during 2001-2003. Here Darryl and Steve VanderHaak assemble a T-fitting with riser for manure application.

February 1, 2004 is the cut-off date to be considered eligible for 2004 Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funding! Those who submitted applications in 2003 and were not funded need to contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Lynden field office (360-354-2035) if they wish to be considered for 2004 funding. To submit a new application or for additional information, please contact the District office or the NRCS Lynden field office.

EQIP funds are used to accomplish conserva-

tion goals on private land. Goals include improving water quality and quantity, enhancing wildlife habitat, and assisting landowners in meeting environmental regulations. Eligible landowners enter into contracts to obtain financial assistance for implementing conservation goals.

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Whatcom
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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TWO THINGS TO CHEER ABOUT:

Most Dairy Producers Meet Nutrient Management Plan Certification Deadline & Portage Bay Shellfish Beds Reopen

In 1998 the state legislature passed the Dairy Nutrient Management Act (RCW 90.64), stating the need "to establish...a process that provided for the proper and effective management of dairy nutrients that affect ... surface or ground waters in the state". One of the main issues that led to the passage of this statewide law was the closure of shellfish beds located in Portage Bay on the Lummi Reservation. The shellfish beds were closed due to high fecal coliform (FC) bacteria levels. Manure from dairy operations in the Nooksack Basin was considered to be one of the main sources of the FC bacteria.

To comply with the nutrient management law all dairy producers were first required to obtain a conservation district approved plan for their farms by June 30, 2001. Then both the producer and the conservation district were to certify that the plan was fully implemented by December 31, 2003. The reasoning behind this law was simple: if dairy producers are given time as well as technical and financial resources (if necessary) to improve manure management on their farms, then water quality will also improve.

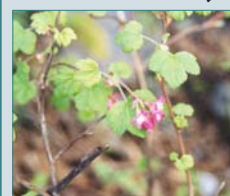
The good news is that this strategy has worked very well, especially here in Whatcom County! Almost every dairy in Whatcom County met the December 31, 2003 deadline for plan certification - 175 out of 182 active dairies were certified by the December 31st deadline, an impressive 96%. More importantly, water quality has improved significantly over the last five years. The Department of Ecology noticed a steady decline in FC counts in water samples collected in areas of the county where dairy farming is one of the principal land uses. Some of these Nooksack River tributary areas are already reaching goals that had been set to achieve by the year 2005.

The best news of all is that in October 2003 the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) opened all but a small percentage of the shellfish beds in Portage Bay. The reopening of these beds means that many people in this area will benefit from the efforts and resources dairy producers invested in improving nutrient management on their farms. So thank you! The board and staff of the Conservation District are among the many that appreciate what the local dairy industry has accomplished.

BSE (Mad Cow Disease) Information

The lead agency within the USDA for handling questions concerning Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), otherwise known as "mad cow disease", is the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). All general inquiries regarding BSE should be referred to APHIS at 1-866-873-3266 (recorded message) or 1-800-601-9327. The APHIS website (www.aphis.usda.gov) offers a comprehensive overview of BSE (see "Hot Issues" on the Home Page's menu).

Conservation District Annual Spring Plant Sale March 19-20, 2004!



Windbreaks * Privacy * Noise Reduction * Odor Control * Beautification* Wildlife Habitat Enhancement* - These are a few reasons to think about buying plants at the Conservation District's spring plant sale. If you don't receive an order form from the District later this month, then stop by the District office and pick one up. Our prices and selection are better than ever!



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whatcomcd.org](http://www.whatcomcd.org)

Whatcom Conservation District Board of Supervisors Election Set for March 9th

Get involved in directing natural resource conservation programs by becoming a member of the WCD Board of Supervisors! One elected position on the District's five-member Board will be filled through an election that will take place at the District's office on March 9th. If you are interested in running for this position, contact the District office for nomination petitions and information about duties and eligibility requirements.

WHATCOM COUNTY WATER QUALITY ENEMY #1

WANTED DEAD – Fecal Coliform Bacteria – aka: FC; Pathogenic bacteria; E. Coli

PLACE OF RESIDENCE – Manure. Not choosy about what kind – human, bovine, duck, seagull any warm blooded animal works just fine.

WANTED FOR THE FOLLOWING CRIMES: In December 1996 fecal coliform was convicted of closing commercial shellfish beds in Portage Bay and robbing shellfish harvesters of their livelihood. In October 2003 most of the beds were finally reopened. On November 20th 2003, FC counts in Drayton Harbor soared following 2 days of heavy rainfall. These high counts threaten the reopening of Drayton Harbor beds this spring. So far the usual suspects for FC in the area (sewage treatment plant overflows, leaking sewage pipes, failing septic systems, birds, seals) are being ruled out. FC from livestock is now being investigated as a possible source.



Whatcom Conservation District adds "Fecal Coliform" to its deck of "Most Wanted Dead" farmyard bad guys.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO STOP THIS CRIMINAL: Kill them!! Stop them dead in their tracks. Take advantage of FCs' lack of mobility on dry land by maintaining filter strips between manure application areas and water. Keeping FC on land and depriving it of the opportunity to enter water is guaranteed to spell doom for this pesky pathogen.

Count Down To Year's First Manure Application By Counting Up To T-SUM 200



A waste storage pond being agitated prior to application.

The accumulation of 200 heat units (T-Sum 200) since January 1st signals the best time to begin applying manure. Dairy producers can normally expect favorable conditions to begin applying liquid manure by sometime in February or early March in many locations. The main exceptions are fields that are poorly drained and/or prone to frequent flooding. Since 1989 conservation district staff have been determining T-Sum 200's arrival locally, based on weather data maintained either at the sewage treatment facility in Lynden or at the weather station at Clearbrook. The average date for T-Sum 200 to be reached over that 15 year period is February 13th, but it came as early as February 2nd in 1999 and as late as March 11th in 1989. Contact any of the district dairy technicians (Chris Clark, Chuck Timblin, Mark Ockey) starting in February to find out if T-Sum 200 has arrived, or consult Ag Canada's website for conditions in Abbotsford (farmwest.com).

'Tis the Season to Turn In Nutrient Management Records and Receipts for Relay Crops!

Farms under state cost share and/or federal (EQIP) contract to maintain nutrient management records and/or plant relay crops in silage corn fields need to turn in records and receipts before they will be eligible to receive credit for completing these practices.

