In case you missed it...

On August 24, Hans Wolfisberg hosted a pasture walk at his beautiful Edelweiss Dairy in partnership with Whatcom Conservation District and Organic Valley Cooperative. The event was attended by a range of local farmers and community members who got to hear about Hans’s strategies for running a successful organic dairy in the Pacific Northwest.

A big thanks to Hans for hosting and to everyone who attended!

To learn about more upcoming events visit:
www.whatcomcd.org/calendar/month

Fall 2018

Connecting with the Whatcom Dairy Community

Whatcom Dairy News

Shared Waters
Crossing the border and building partnerships.
Meg Harris, WCD and Kerri Love, WSDA

Did you know that Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) and our local water quality partners are working with colleagues across the border to address sources of fecal coliform bacteria in our shared Fishtrap and Bertrand Creek watersheds?

It began in 2015 with Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) sampling multiple sites along the border during storm events. That same year, the North Lynden Watershed Improvement District (WID), working with Whatcom County, began weekly sampling of additional border stations. A year later, a Canadian group, Langley Environmental Partners Society, began monitoring 12 sites within the Township of Langley.

Based on the trends observed through these sampling efforts, as well as the concerns of the local agricultural community, County Executive Jack Louws contacted Governor Inslee in 2016 to request assistance in coordinating transboundary work to identify and correct bacteria sources.

A commitment was made in the spring of 2016, to address transboundary water quality concerns in our shared Fishtrap and Bertrand watersheds through the formation of the BC/WA Nooksack River Transboundary Water Quality Task Group.

Over the next three years, staff from both British Columbia and Washington (including local representatives from WCD, WSDA and Whatcom County) will collaborate on water quality projects such as sampling on both sides of the border, sharing of water quality data, and conducting outreach to homeowners, agricultural producers, and the public.

Reducing bacteria in our waterways is important to the health of our families, pets and livestock. It is also a large task that requires bringing everyone to the table. We are pleased to be working as a team with our Canadian partners to improve water quality in the Nooksack Basin.

Stay up to date on what’s happening with water quality locally by checking the publicly available Interactive Results Map.

http://www.whatcomcd.org/water-quality

New Project Announcement!

Whatcom CD is working with Exact Scientific Services, with funding from the Washington State Conservation Commission, to improve water quality pollution source characterization using DNA molecular source tracking techniques. Over the next year, the project will build a fecal reference catalog based on local potential pollution sources. The project will also characterize water samples to demonstrate use of the reference catalog. The goal is to improve the future of water quality sampling & analysis and better identify the sources of fecal pollution in Whatcom County watersheds.

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Project Highlight—Appel Farm Fish Barrier Removal

Stacked culverts with top-hinge style flap gates, made Clarkson Creek impassible to fish trying to move upstream. That is until last summer (2017), when Appel Farms partnered with Whatcom Conservation District, Whatcom Co. Flood Control Zone District, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Diking District #3 to install new culverts and self-regulating floodgates.

The new floodgates are side-hinged and are regulated by a float activated control. The gates are held in an open position until flood waters rise to a predetermined level. Once this level is reached, the gates close to prevent upstream flooding. Since the gates are typically in a open position, the system also improves farm field drainage.

“I feel good for my family going forward that this part of the farm is secure. They won’t be dealing with this again in their lifetime,” said Rich Appel of the project.

Improved fish passage is another benefit of the project. The installation of the new self-regulating floodgates opened up 2.2 miles of fish habitat upstream. Rich cited this as another motivating factor for the Appels, “I think farmers take a special interest in the environment because we work in the environment every day.”

This is a great example of a project that is win-win for both farmer and fish!

What can the Conservation District do for you?

Whatcom Conservation District’s (WCD) mission is to assist land managers with their conservation choices. We are non-regulatory and working with us is voluntary, confidential, and free. We really are just here to help and we have a number of services for dairy farmers!

Dairy Nutrient Management Plans

WCD has trained planners to write Dairy Nutrient Management Plans (DNMP) that meet the requirements of WA State and WA Dept. of Agriculture (WSDA). If you need a DNMP, or a DNMP update, a planner will visit your farm to conduct a whole farm assessment and work with you on implementing practices.

Dairies in WA are required to have an approved and certified DNMP; farms that undergo significant changes may be required to have a plan update. Updates are a chance to preemptively identify water quality issues, address challenges, or plan for expansion.

Farm Assessments

Farms assessments are more limited in scope than a DNMP or CNMP. During a farm assessment we can help you preemptively identify water quality issues, plan for expansion, or help you address any challenges you may be having. A farm assessment is also required for signing up for the state cost share program.

Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans

WCD staff are also able to write Comprehensive Nutrient Management plans (CNMP). These plans are now required to sign up for cost share through the NRCS federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). While the scope and requirements of the CNMP differ from the DNMP, the process of working with a planner on a CNMP is similar.

Runoff Prevention: Application Setback Distances

When applying manure, remember to follow all manure application setback guidance throughout the year. These distances are in place to help you avoid applying too close to a waterbody or sensitive area when the risk of runoff is high. The table below gives a summary of the distance you should stay back from all waterways or sensitive areas during the low risk growing season, you can apply up to 40’ (Mar, Apr, Sept) and 80’ from Oct 1-Feb 28. A Big Gun should NEVER be closer than 40’ due to drift. These guidelines apply to liquid and solid manures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Distance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>80’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>80’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>40’</td>
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<td>Apr 1/15</td>
<td>40’/10’</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>10’</td>
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<td>June</td>
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<td>Oct</td>
<td>40’</td>
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<td>Nov</td>
<td>80’</td>
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<td>Dec</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Winterizing Your Dairy

The weather is changing and it is time to make sure you are ready for a wet Whatcom County winter. Preparing your farm ahead of time will save you major headaches down the road.

- Use windows of good weather to make final manure applications and free up storage space before the upcoming rainy season. Applications need to be made at agronomic rates and follow seasonal setbacks (80ft in Oct.) from water or other sensitive areas.

- Stay up to date on local conditions! Sign up for Whatcom Manure Spreading Advisory Text Alerts to have occasional messages about significant weather events and manure spreading conditions sent directly to your phone. To sign up, text EZManure to 797979.

- Make sure your fields don’t stay bare over the winter, plant cover crops! Cover crops help reduce weed pressures, prevent erosion, take up any unused nutrients that were applied earlier in the season, and increase soil organic matter. Rye, winter wheat, and many perennial grasses can all be planted in to the beginning of October.

- Check your barn curtains to make sure they are operating properly. Repair any holes or tears.

- Ensure your barn has adequate ventilation. Check ventilation fans to make sure they are functioning properly and complete any needed maintenance.

- Repair leaks in water fountains or water lines. Ice buildup is a hazard to both people and livestock.

- Ensure animals have access to a frost free drinking water. Check and clean heating elements if used.

- Repair or replace gutters and downspouts that aren't in working order. This will help limit the amount of clean water entering your storage system.

- Keep an adequate supply of feed, bedding, and common veterinary supplies on hand in case roads become impassible in a storm.

- Monitor soil moisture levels and remove animals from pastures before your pasture is saturated and before your pastures are grazed below 3 inches of remaining stubble. This will help you avoid soil compaction and preserve your pastures for next year.

- Make sure you have a second source of power, such as a generator. Test and service your generator(s) or other power source and make sure you have enough fuel on hand.

- Clean your drains. Drains work overtime during the winter in Western Washington and you do not want yours to be partially or fully blocked.

- Make sure you have a snow plan in place. Be prepared with a plan on how to remove and store snow; manage animals, milk, and staff if stuck for a few days; and how to collect, transport and store manure.