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Better Knot Acres Farm Free-Range Laying Hens and Rooster

The VSP Voice



H Toutle Beef Farm Seeking Volunteers for Conservation Tree Planting

Hagen Beef Farm is taking a proactive approach to addressing the protection of environmentally sensitive natural resources where they interact with farming activities.

And while many landowners are a little apprehensive about allowing staff from governmental agencies onto their property, Hal and Judy Hagen are pleased with the results of participating in the Cowlitz County Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP).

Cowlitz County VSP is coordinated by Cowlitz County Long Range Planning staff who are dedicated to providing technical assistance to local farms seeking to resolve natural resource issues that arise during normal day-to-day farming operations.

The Hagens have been raising grass-fed, hormone-free beef for 20 years in Toutle, Washington and sought out assistance from local VSP staff to address multiple issues on their farm.

Farmer Hal's first concern is to address involved mud/manure management. He and Judy take pride in their small herd and the quality of their beef, and are dedicated to producing beef in a way that keeps their herd

healthy and productive, while protecting the water quality into Hemlock Creek, and improving habitat for wildlife, & native Coho salmon. They've constructed a mud-free

WDFW staff are out surveying Hemlock creek monthly during spawning season." Judy said. "We love our beautiful creek, and want to see more salmon return each year."



Hal Hagen, Norm Dick (Carbon Capture Foundation) and five volunteers from Toutle Lake School District.

winter feeding station, replaced barbed-wire with a wildlife-friendly fencing system, and are now seeking volunteers to help finish planting 200 more native trees seedlings along Hemlock Creek. Once grown, the trees will help restore natural watershed function to the reach of Hemlock Creek that flows through the Hagen's farm and into Silver Lake, itself an impaired waterbody.

Mature trees are vital to normal watershed function and provide many benefits to fish, wildlife, and farmer alike. One of the more important benefits is the prevention of loss of valuable farm land. Without deep, branching root systems to hold the soil in place, land becomes highly erodible, steep streambanks collapse, and get washed away.

Grown trees stabilize streambanks, provide shade to keep waters cold, thereby providing optimal levels of dissolved oxygen needed by juvenile and adult salmonids.

In addition, organic material (dead leaves) that falls into the creek feed larval insect forms and tiny mollusks eaten by juvenile fish, so planting trees now will also benefit future generations of fish yet to come.

If you'd like to volunteer and also learn about Riparian Tree Planting, bring a shovel, get your hands dirty, and join the fun!

If your family or group would like to help Hagen Beef Farm prevent farm loss, protect water quality, and enhance habitat for fish & wildlife, contact your VSP staff at: (360) 577-3042, Ext. 6660 or call Judy Hagen at: (360) 200-0545

**Are you interested in Conservation Farming?
Sign up for the VSP today!
Contact: Mark Taylor
taylorm@co.cowlitz.wa.us
or call: (360) 577-3042, Ext. 1-6660**

Booth Teaches Conservation at Cowlitz Community Farmers Market

Are you interested in fish, forests, farms, and families? Have you ever considered starting a small scale farm and working your own land to provide your family with healthy, delicious meals? Do you have questions about farming in general or would you like to learn about the land stewardship and natural resource conservation?

bank stabilization to prevent further loss of farmland, protect water quality, and enhance habitat for fish, wildlife & native pollinators.

In addition, Cowlitz County VSP can share methods for increasing in-stream habitat complexity for aquatic species, and help your farm assist with the recovery of native fish.

And if you're interested in starting a small

scale farm or learning how to develop new markets or want to make your land more productive, Cowlitz County VSP currently has an active Ag. Viability sub-committee and is in the process of recruiting a panel of local farmers who can discuss the challenges they've overcome and the successes they've made on their local farms – farmers who would love the opportunity to chat and share their knowledge of sustainable, regenerative farming with you. So, swing on by and drop in for a visit – we'd love to chat!

And if interested, click on the web link below and we can list your farm on our new Cowlitz County Fresh! map so that local families can buy direct from your farm!



Local farmer and VSP Work Group member, Jan Wilson encourages a young couple moving to Cowlitz County to consider starting a small scale farm. Photo Credit: Mark Taylor, VSP staff

Then consider swinging by the Cowlitz County VSP conservation farming booth from 9:00 am until 2:00 pm on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month during the Cowlitz Community Farmers Market season from May 2021 through October 23rd, 2021.

VSP staff and members of Cowlitz County VSP's Ag. Viability Sub-committee will be available to chat and discuss all things related to farming. In addition, Cowlitz County VSP can provide technical assistance to aid local landowners in resolving natural resource issues they may be dealing with on the farm.

Do you have highly erodible, collapsing streambanks or fish-bearing stream intersecting with your farm activities? Cowlitz County VSP staff and other technical service providers are available to provide a free farm consultation and introduce you to fish-friendly methods, such as bio-engineered



VSP Work Group member, Joel Rupley, discusses using mason bees to increase fruit production with a visiting farmer from Lewis County. Photo Credit: Mark Taylor, VSP staff



Do you want to increase fruit production on your land next year?
Would you like to learn how native pollinators can help?
Sign up for the 2022 VSP Adopt-A-Mason Bee program to get on next year's list today!

Small Scale Farming Going Strong in Cowlitz County

There's nothing like eating a healthy meal made from locally grown, farm-fresh ingredients. And what better way to start your morning than eggs that came from free-range chickens?

Free-range eggs provide a nutritional morning boost unlike any other foods: 6 grams of proteins, 0 carbohydrates, 70 milligrams of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids, healthy doses of Vitamins A & D, high levels of lutein and zeaxanthin (which lower risk of vision loss later in life), and up to one third less cholesterol than eggs purchased at a conventional supermarket. In addition to their vivid orange color, the yolks have a more intense flavor than store-bought eggs.

Delicious, healthy free-range eggs, like those pictured in the photo, can be purchased from local farms, like Better Knot Acres farm in

Toutle, Washington. I recently had the pleasure of visiting the farm and got to see the flock of free-range laying produced those beauties. The mature hens currently produce about one dozen eggs per day, with additional younger poults that will soon start laying even more eggs in the upcoming months. Ana and Eric Meadows and their children: Layla, Kira, and Gabriel along with Ana's mother, Laura. The family also raises Nigerian Dwarf goats, as well, since their children enjoy drinking the milk and using it to make their own soap.

The Meadow's family farm also has a nice vegetable garden and they produce their own lamb & pork. They love farming so much that they are currently seeking additional acreage to increase their production.



Farm-fresh eggs produced by Better Knot Acres Farm in Toutle, Washington. Photo courtesy of: Ana Meadows

also raises Nigerian Dwarf goats, as well, since their children enjoy drinking the milk and using it to make their own soap. The Meadow's farm also has a nice vegetable garden and they produce their own lamb & pork.

And while not exactly small scale, if you're looking for some locally grown berries to add to your breakfast, George and Ted Thoeny are just now getting their strawberries out for sale. You can purchase them at the NAPA Auto Parts store parking lot on the west side of I-5 at exit 20 in Woodland, Washington or come to the Cowlitz Community Farmers Market from 9:00 am until 2:00 pm on Tuesdays and Saturdays across from the Cowlitz Expo Center and Fairgrounds in Longview, Washington. Strawberry season goes fast, but it is

followed by red raspberries, black berries, and blueberries, so be sure to stop by the market and support another great local farm.

In regards to a little honey to sweeten your day, Robert Norris of Peace in the Valley Apiary & Nursery, in Castle Rock, Washington, keeps hives that produce a prize that is highly sought after – the liquid gold know as local honey, which he sells every Tuesday from 9:00 am until 2:00 pm at the Cowlitz Community Farmers Market in Longview,

Washington. Honey produced from a variety of local beekeepers can also be found at

Four Corners Farm & Garden in Castle Rock, and at Drew's Grocery & Service in Toutle, Washington.

If you're looking for locally grown produce, but sure to visit the two farmers market booths manned by Jesse Swofford of Swofford Family Farms and Ruth McKee of Willow Grove Gardens & Pumpkin Patch at the farmers market in Longview, Washington.

Additional local small scale farms to support include: Hubbard Gardens, Thornton's Farm, Preserving the Harvest, Crawford Farm, and Watershed Garden Works & Nursery. Thorntons sell at Castle Rock Farmers Market on Sundays. You can find Thornton's farm and the others mentioned above on Facebook. Check out all of the farms, then choose those you'd like to support and call them to set up an appointment to buy directly from their farm(s) or meet at a pre-arranged drop off site.

Thanks for supporting your local farms and helping to keep them viable. Remember... **Buy local – Buy Cowlitz County Fresh!**

<https://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/1455/Voluntary-Stewardship-Program>

Community Events

VSP Ag. Viability Committee Meeting

Tuesdays, June 1st & 15th, 2021 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM (PDT)

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/636446813>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: +1 (872) 240-3311 Access Code: 636-446-813

VSP Work Group Meeting

Tuesdays, June 8th, 2021 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (PDT)

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/636446813>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: +1 (872) 240-3311 Access Code: 636-446-813

VSP Conservation Farming Educational Booth

Cowlitz Community Farmers Market: 9:00 am to 2:00 pm

2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month, June 12, 2021 – June 26, 2021

Silver Lake Watershed Advisory Council Mtg.

Tuesday, June 8, 2021 – 1:30 pm

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS, or Android:

<https://wsu.zoom.us/j/7756056320?pwd=RzVxbT10dXpyUjJlSDdsWnJuTXdydz09>

Meeting ID: 775 605 6320 Password: 12345

Phone Call: +1 253 215 8782 +12532158782,7756056320#

Cowlitz County Voluntary Stewardship Program
Building and Planning
207 Fourth Avenue North, Rm. 119
Kelso, WA 98626-4124
www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/vsp

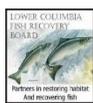


May 2021 issue!
Notice: We have a new phone number: (360) 577-3042, Extension 6660

Cowlitz County VSP

Dedicated to strengthening agriculture viability through conservation farming practices that protect water quality and enhance environmentally critical areas, and to the promotion of productive farmland(s) so that future generations can choose to farm.

Conservation Partners... and participating local landowners!



Hemlock Creek Riparian Tree Planting Volunteers on Hagen Beef Farm