



# South Douglas News

South Douglas Conservation District

Fall 2023

Assisting cooperators to adopt, implement and promote conservation practices which encourage good land stewardship and the protection of natural resources.

## FALL CHIPPING COMING UP

Fall chipping days are planned for early November. If you live within the South Douglas CD boundaries, follow the guidelines on our website. Remember to place all stump ends facing the same way (similar to the photo at right). This is for not only quick chipping, but for the safety of the chipping crew. No Black Locust, Hawthorn or other thorny trees. The chips are yours so plan for what you will do with them—they can be used for mulch or walkways. If you do have just a small pile you may just want to put them in the trash or a compost pile. We do encourage chipping for fuels reduction to lower fire danger, but very small piles are not cost effective for the district.

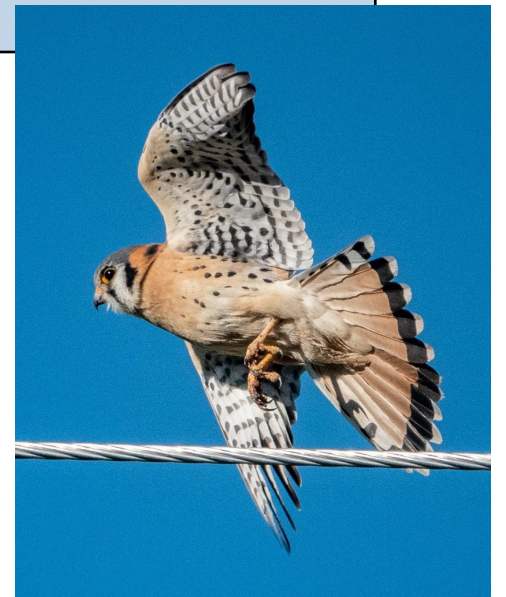


We need to know by October 20 if you want to be put on the list so we can coordinate with our chipping crew and map the route. Contact us at 509-745-9160 so we can schedule you.

This newsletter will be available in Spanish on our website soon after you receive it in the mail. We hope to inform more of our Douglas County residents about the importance of conserving our natural resources. Please let us know if this is beneficial to you.

Este boletín estará disponible en español en nuestro sitio web poco después de que lo reciba por correo. Esperamos informar a más residentes del condado de Douglas sobre la importancia de conservar nuestros recursos naturales. Por favor, háganos saber si esto es beneficioso para usted.

POSTAL CUSTOMER  
LOCAL



Kestrel box—see page 3

## WHAT'S A CWPP?

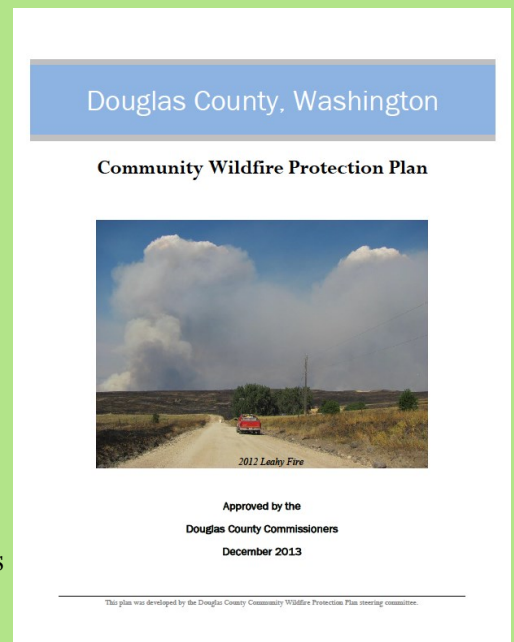
‘Not another acronym’ you say. The Douglas County Community Wide Protection Plan (CWPP) was first approved by the Douglas County Commissioners in 2013. A CWPP is a comprehensive plan developed by local citizens and state and federal agencies, and covers issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, structure protection and other needs of the community.

It is time to update this plan for Douglas County. In the last ten years many factors have changed. Warmer, drier weather, increased population, land use changes and community awareness of the dangers of wildfire will all impact the revision.

Currently we are applying for grants to fund this revision. Past participants have included South Douglas and Foster Creek Conservation Districts, Douglas County Commissioners, local fire districts, Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Land Management and other local entities. Northwest Management, Inc, wrote the plan and developed the maps based on information obtained at our meetings. As we move forward on this project we are looking for Douglas County residents and stakeholders who want to participate. A series of meetings throughout the county as well as (the dreaded) Zoom meetings will be organized.

If you google CWPP Douglas County WA, you will see the current plan. It is 106 pages and details the fire history of the county, risk assessments and mitigation activities. Updates and projects will need to be decided on, and agencies and landowners will be vital in deciding what to include.

If you are interested in being a part of this process, contact either the Conservation Districts or your local fire district. South Douglas is organizing this project and we are looking for participants. We hope to have this completed by Spring of 2025.



## NEW COST SHARE PROGRAM LEXI GARDNER—NRCS

On September 20, 2023, USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in WA announced the adoption of a new practice standard which will help producers across the state improve air quality and energy efficiency. This practice is known as Combustion System Improvement (Best Management Practice #372).

This cost share will be for replacement of diesel engines. The conservation practice targets oxides of nitrogen emissions and energy savings. Any equipment purchased prior to contract execution is ineligible. Any contracted equipment replaced must be new equipment. The in-use equipment must be discontinued and dismantled when the new equipment is put into use. Payments will not be issued until the new equipment is received and the old equipment is proven to be properly decommissioned.

### What does decommission mean?

To disable an engine, make a minimum of a 3-inch-diameter hole in the engine block including a portion of the oil pan rail (sealing surface). For mobile units, in addition to disabling the engine, completely sever the vehicle frame railings or destroy the bell-housing and transmission components if not equipped with a frame. Additional means may include compromising the drivetrain components by knocking holes in the transmission casing and cutting axles and axle housings. For other units, disable the units using an approved NRCS method. Dispose of units and associated materials or contents in accordance with environmental laws and regulations. Ensure that any equipment remaining onsite does not create a nuisance or habitat for vectors.

NRCS accepts applications year-round. However, to be considered for the fiscal year of 2024, applications need to be turned in no later than October 20, 2023. Submission of an EQIP application does not guarantee funding. Each applicant must establish themselves as a USDA customer and obtain all Farm Service Agency eligibility requirements by November 17, 2023. This application deadline is not only for the Combustion System Improvement practice but for all EQIP practice considerations.

To contact Douglas County NRCS office about applications email [lexi.gardner@usda.gov](mailto:lexi.gardner@usda.gov) or call 509-745-3007.

## Audubon Kestrel Program Report 2023

Richard Scranton

NCW Audubon continues a long-term project placing and monitoring American Kestrel boxes on or near the Waterville Plateau. These beneficial birds of prey have diminished throughout North America. Providing nest boxes helps these small falcons stabilize their population over time.

Here are some interesting data points gleaned from the volunteers work this year:

- ☐ The number of boxes that we monitored increased by 20%, from 156 last year to 187 in 2023.
- ☐ We made a total of 905 box visits, from March 14 to August 14, averaging 4.8 visits per box.
- ☐ 382 birds fledged, a 54% increase over last season's 247 fledglings.
- ☐ Almost half (47%) of the boxes fledged one or more young, an increase from last year's 37%.
- ☐ 90% of the eggs laid this year fledged. This is down slightly from last year's 93% success rate.



The most exciting statistic we found from our work this past year is that over 382 kestrels fledged, an amazingly high nestling success rate.

Our plan is to build on our success over the last few years and add more boxes to our established routes. We would love to bring in more volunteers to help in 2024. **If interested, please contact Richard Scranton at [rscran4350@yahoo.com](mailto:rscran4350@yahoo.com).**

Note from Carol: The Audubon Society put a kestrel box at our place on Douglas Creek in 2022. No birds used it. This year when the team came out to take a look the birds had built a nest in an old woodpecker hole in the well house just next to the box. We had all five chicks fledge. Looking forward to next year.

The Kestrels commonly eat insects and invertebrates such as grasshoppers, beetles, moths and spiders. They also eat small mammals such as mice and voles. They do sometimes eat small birds but it is not a large part of their diet.

### WE HAVE COST SHARE DOLLARS!!

Through the Washington Conservation Commission we receive grant dollars that we can use to help cooperators with conservation projects. We have funded a variety of projects in the past, from windbreaks to livestock waterers. These projects are usually in rural areas—we don't fund landscape projects in neighborhoods or yards. If you have questions or a project in mind, visit our website for guidance or call the office about your project.

These projects will be within the South Douglas Conservation District boundaries, which is roughly the southern half of Douglas County. Foster Creek Conservation District is the northern half, with their own funding.

"Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago." Warren Buffett



## Honey Bees vs. Native Bees

No doubt you have heard the accusation that somehow honey bees outcompete native bees and “don’t belong here.” Research that shows honey bees and native bees have been getting along for centuries. Honey bees have been in the United States since at least 1622. Indeed, a fossil of the *Apis nearctica* spp, a relative of the honey bee, has been discovered dating back to the Miocene Era—five million years ago. So honey bees and natives have been coexisting for a long time.



What has changed? Humans. As areas are bulldozed, and stripped of woods, fields, wetland and streams, the insects, birds and other wildlife have lost their places to nest, find food, and shelter. Pristine lawns and tidy shrubs do not provide habitat for most pollinators, let alone other wildlife. Fifty million acres of perfect suburban lawn doesn’t help.

Honey bees are generalists with short tongues, meaning they prefer flowers with shallow centers so they can easily access the pollen and nectar. They like the flowers of many trees, shrubs, annuals, perennials both native and non native.

Many native bees have long tongues and visit many native shrubs and flowers as well as “long throated” flowers such as tomatoes, peppers and blueberries. Typically native bees travel 100-300 yards from their homes; honey bees can travel up to five miles to find food.

Honey bees are responsible for pollinating 80% of all flowering plants and 130 types of fruits and vegetables in the U.S, worth \$20 billion of crops each year. Honey bees possess “flower fidelity” which means they will visit 50-100 apple blossoms or carrot or clover flowers instead of an apple here and a mustard there, so the flowers visited by honey bees receive only the pollen from the same species, receiving maximum pollination. The added advantage of moving honey bees hives from one orchard to another is maximum pollinator services for the crops. Thanks to the honey bees, birds, insects and other wildlife thrive on the fruits pollinated by the honey bees.

Something to consider: Currently, 330 million people live in the United States with an estimated count of 400 million by 2050. Since 2000, the total area of farmland in the U.S. has decreased by almost 50 million acres, reaching a total of 893.4 million acres as of 2022. For the first time, we are importing more food that we export, meaning we are depending on other countries for food. In the monoculture system common in the U.S. and other advanced countries, honey bees are crucial to providing the pollination needed to feed animals and people. Insufficient pollination can lead to undernourishment. Instead of arguing about honey bees and native bees, maybe we should be concentrating on finding ways to keep farmland in production and provide more habitat for all pollinators.

(This information was gleaned from the August 2023 issue of Bee Culture. Excellent publication.)

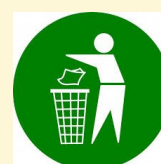
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