



BENTON CONSERVATION DISTRICT

District Manager: Mark Nielson Board Chair: Jack Clark
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Legislative District: 8, 16 Congressional District: 4

Other accomplishments:



BCD applies science to natural resource concerns, such as this innovative pneumatic tube for fish passage at our Salmon Summit. Photo by Rachel Little



BCD provides free drinking water well testing for nitrates, which are colorless and odorless, yet can render water unsafe to drink. Photo by Rachel Little



SCC Natural Resource Investment funds allowed for the conversion of 23 acres of flood irrigated pasture to pod lines. Photo by Heather Wendt

2017 FEATURE ACCOMPLISHMENT

CONSERVATION INNOVATION PROTECTS TRADITIONS



New wheat harvester leaves stalk standing as a windbreak, which stops erosion, traps moisture, and provides cover for wildlife. Photo by Rachel Little

Resource challenge

Brothers Garrett and Devin Moon wanted to continue the family tradition of wheat farming. Local soil is rich, but desert conditions without irrigation make fields vulnerable to wind erosion. This erosion leads to a type of air pollution when so many soil particles from acres of fields become airborne. The prevailing winds carry dust from the wheat fields directly to the most heavily populated areas of the county, often crossing roads and causing car accidents from reduced visibility.

Project summary and results

Benton Conservation District (BCD) provided financial assistance to Moon Farm to demonstrate novel harvesting equipment. The new harvester cuts only the valuable seed head, so the wheat stalks remain standing. These standing stalks become windbreaks, greatly reducing erosion and trapping snow, which improves soil moisture. Designed to resolve a resource issue, this practice also enhances public safety by protecting roadway visibility.



Wind blows soil and snow off traditional fields, across State Route 221, but not from stripper header field (brown background). Photo by Rachel Little

Devin explains “There’s a whole laundry list of benefits from using equipment like this, from less erosion issues, less fuel, [to] benefiting wildlife. Yeah, it’s a win-win all the way around.”

Key partners: Moon Farms; Benton Clean Air Agency

MORE WORK TO DO

- ▶ Continue development of groundwater characterization project, and work with stakeholder group to develop recommendations.
- ▶ Begin implementation of Benton County Voluntary Stewardship Program work plan.
- ▶ Begin “Lower Yakima Water Quality, Nutrient, and Aquatic Vegetation Dynamics” project (funded by Department of Ecology) as soon as funding linked to capital budget is released.