



## WHITMAN CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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Legislative District: 9 Congressional District: 5

### Other accomplishments:

- ▶ Provided cost-share for livestock fencing to increase the number of pastures so they can be grazed rotationally.
- ▶ Provided cost-share for soil electrical conductivity mapping so custom nutrient applications can be performed to reduce inputs and the potential of non-point source pollution.
- ▶ Provided cost-share for tractor GPS navigation system so there is more precision when seeding and applying chemicals, which reduces inefficiencies.
- ▶ Acquired a grant to continue more cover cropping.

### 2017 FEATURE ACCOMPLISHMENT

## GRAZING COVER CROP ON TRADITIONALLY FALLOWED FIELDS

### Resource challenge

Maintaining economically viable soil on fallow fields is a tricky business. As an alternative, grazing cover crops provides many opportunities to recoup costs by increasing the soil health capital due to the cover crop itself. It defers the grazing and feeding of livestock that would otherwise occur and provides an organic source of fertilizer. Incorporating cover crops and grazers into commodity farming systems is a viable path to simultaneously increase profits and soil health.

### Project summary and results

The Whitman Conservation District has been working with a producer who planted an experimental 25-acre cover crop in his chemical fallow field in spring of 2016. The cover crop was grazed upon maturity and then planted with a winter wheat crop in fall 2016. The cover crop trial performed so well that the landowner requested more cost-share from the district to plant cover crop on a different 40-acre section of the field that was just harvested. The field was chemical fallowed in summer 2016, except for where a fall cover crop was planted. The cover crop was then grazed in spring 2017 upon maturity. It performed so well, the landowner actually was able to bale some for later use before spraying it out to plant winter wheat this fall.

**Key partners:** Washington State Conservation Commission



Cover crop mixture of clover, plantain, radish, brassica, and cabbage on a field that would have been fallowed.



Cover crop after rotationally grazing the livestock to increase utilization.

## MORE WORK TO DO

- ▶ Continue cover crop trials and outreach among dryland wheat producers.
- ▶ Continue work under 34 contracts through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (WRIA 34).
- ▶ Incorporate more volunteer wildlife planting days.