



Benton Conservation District

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Legislative District: 8, 16 Congressional District: 4

Other Accomplishments



21 acres were converted from wheel line irrigation to a center pivot system using State Conservation Commission Natural Resource Investment funds. Photo by Melissa Pierce



BCD partnered with the City of Kennewick to design and oversee the implementation of a 20,000 sqft Heritage Garden at Hansen Park. Photo by Donald Weiber, City of Kennewick



BCD Small Farms Program helped landowners to restore over 11 acres of native habitat. Photo by Melissa Pierce

2018 FEATURE ACCOMPLISHMENT

What's in the Well? Protecting Health and Water Quality

Resource Challenge

Nitrate is a form of nitrogen that can dissolve in water, move through soil, and contaminate underground water supplies. Many agricultural and residential activities over time can lead to nitrate contamination in groundwater. Nitrate is colorless and odorless, yet in high concentrations, it can violate federal standards for safe drinking water. Groundwater is the sole source of drinking water for many local residents. The concentrations of nitrate in local groundwater are largely unknown.

Project Summary and Results

Benton Conservation District (BCD) led an effort to map nitrate concentrations in groundwater with funding from Department of Ecology. BCD offered free nitrate testing to owners of drinking water wells to help provide data and provide public health education. Additional data was collected voluntarily from irrigation wells. The map was used by a stakeholder group to help prioritize geographic areas for future action to reduce nitrate contamination. Stakeholders were recruited from the farming and ranching community, cities, irrigation districts, the health district, Ecology, and Benton County.



BCD resource conservationist collects water sample from a private drinking well for free nitrate testing. Photo by Rachel Little

Key Partners

Washington Department of Ecology; Benton-Franklin Health District; Benton County

Priorities for 2019...

- ▶ Continue working with landowners to develop conservation plans and best management practices for the Voluntary Stewardship Program.
- ▶ Analyze results from the use of the Weedit Spray System in the Horse Heaven Hills.
- ▶ Conduct a groundwater recharge pilot study this winter to investigate enhancing thermal refuge potential in the Yakima River.