

"Community Waters" theme of 2000 Soil and Water Stewardship

Keeping community waters clean and plentiful is a common goal all Americans should embrace, according to organizers of the 2000 Soil and Water Stewardship Week, set for April 30 to May 7. The focus of this year's national observance is on the total watershed management approach to natural resource conservation.

A watershed is defined as an area of land that sheds water into a common water body, such as a river or lake. There are thousands of identified watersheds in America. Since we all live in a watershed, what we do in our own backyard has important consequences to everyone else who lives downstream from us.

"Developing a positive stewardship attitude is important as we work together to maintain an adequate supply of clean water," said Kay C. VanNatta, chairperson of the Columbia Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), local sponsor of this year's Soil and Water Stewardship Week. "Our local conservation district would like to help take the leadership to bring all interested groups and individuals together to discuss how to improve the health of our own watershed," VanNatta added.

Columbia SWCD sponsors three active watershed councils in Columbia county, the Nehalem River Watershed Council (Maggie Peyton, Coordinator), the Lower Columbia River WC (Margaret Magruder, Coordinator), and the Scappoose Bay WC (Co-Presidents, Maddy Sheehan and Kehn Gibson). Numerous salmon restoration, assessment, habitat enhancements and water quality improvement projects are underway with each of the watershed councils.

People interested in watershed activities should contact their local Council for information on projects and programs. Columbia SWCD can provide contact numbers.

The abundance of good, clean water in our communities is not guaranteed as some kind of right. Rather, it is a resource that must be earned and re-earned as time passes and conditions change. While overall per capita consumption of water has decreased in the last decade, water conservation efforts should never be abandoned. Modern conservation efforts are now focused on ways to keep our natural water supply system clean, helping to keep down costs in water treatment facilities. For example, farmers are now installing

grassed waterways and filter strips along the edges of their fields and streams to prevent soil and nutrients from being washed into major streams.

Similar good management practices are being installed around construction sites and large buildings and parking lots in suburban and urban areas.

The technology is available to ensure a clean water supply. The real challenge, according to VanNatta, is to develop the collective community and polit-

ical will to get the job done. To learn more about how you can help protect your watershed, call Columbia SWCD in St. Helens at 503-397-4555.

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Spring gardening tips at meeting

Chip Bubl, Columbia County Extension Agent, will offer some tips on Spring gardening, May 11 at 10:00 a.m., at the First Christian Church, 410 North Street, Vernonia.

Everyone is welcome. For more information, call 429-8202.

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