NOVEMBER 12, 2008
SWCD BOARD MEETING
PUBLIC WELCOME TO ATTEND
200 SE HAILEY AVENUE
JOHN MURRAY BUILDING
PENDLETON

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **October 31 - November 3**: Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) Annual Conference, Newport.
- **November 5 – November 7**: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Annual Conference, Eugene.

Contents of This Issue

Heidi Presents:
- Community Supported Agriculture...... 2

Corrie Presents:
- Pheasant hunting & CRP ...................... 3

Teresa Presents:
- A bit of History ............................ 4
What is Community Supported Agriculture?

The District hosted its 4th annual Sustainable Ag Sustainable Living Workshop last Thursday where a local farmer from Hermiston co-hosted a roundtable discussion with the Pendleton Community Co-op. While sitting at their table listening to the conversation, it got me thinking about what sustainable agriculture can really mean at a local level. This particular farmer started the first Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in the Hermiston area and I wondered how many people in Umatilla County actually know what a CSA is and that there’s at least one literally out their back door. During times of high fuel and input costs, unemployment, economic uncertainty and the growing desire to purchase food locally I thought it would be beneficial to our readers to explain what defines Community Supported Agriculture and what it can mean to you as a consumer.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) reflects an innovative and resourceful strategy to connect local farmers with local consumers; develop a regional food supply and strong local economy; maintain a sense of community; encourage land stewardship; and honor the knowledge and experience of growers and producers working with small to medium farms. CSA is a unique model of local agriculture whose roots reach back 30 years to Japan where a group of women concerned about the increase in food imports and the corresponding decrease in the farming population initiated a direct growing and purchasing relationship between their group and local farms. This arrangement, called "teikei" in Japanese, translates to "putting the farmers' face on food." This concept traveled to Europe and was adapted to the U.S. and given the name "Community Supported Agriculture" at Indian Line Farm, Massachusetts, in 1985. As of January 2005, there are over 1500 CSA farms across the US and Canada.

CSA is a partnership of mutual commitment between a farm and a community of supporters which provides a direct line between the production and consumption of food. Supporters cover a farm's yearly operating budget by purchasing a share of the season's harvest. CSA members make a commitment to support the farm throughout the season, and assume the costs, risks and bounty of growing food along with the farmer or grower. Members help pay for seeds, fertilizer, water, equipment maintenance, labor, etc. In return, the farm provides, to the best of its ability, a healthy supply of seasonal fresh produce throughout the growing season. Becoming a member creates a responsible relationship between people and the food they eat, the land on which it is grown and those who grow it.

This mutually supportive relationship between local farmers, growers and community members helps create an economically stable farm operation in which members are assured the highest quality produce, often at below retail prices. In return, farmers and growers are guaranteed a reliable market for a diverse selection of crops.

Why Is Community Supported Agriculture Important?

- CSA's direct marketing gives farmers and growers the fairest return on their products
- CSA keeps food dollars in the local community and contributes to the maintenance and establishment of regional food production
- CSA encourages communication and cooperation among farmers
- With a "guaranteed market" for their produce, farmers can invest their time in doing the best job they can rather than looking for buyers
- CSA supports the biodiversity of a given area and the diversity of agriculture through the preservation of small farms producing a wide variety of crops
- CSA creates opportunity for dialogue between farmers and consumers
- CSA creates a sense of social responsibility and stewardship of local land
- CSA puts "the farmers face on food" and increases understanding of how, where, and by whom our food is grown

Excerpted from the Community Supported Agriculture of North America at University of Massachusetts Extension
Hunters Receive Good News about CRP Going into Pheasant Hunting Season

Announcement includes updated soil rental rates and added incentives for allowing hunting access to CRP lands

Saint Paul, Minn. - October 14 –

Pheasants Forever was pleased by three recent major announcements related to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) announced by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). First, the USDA launched new incentive payments for landowners who open up their CRP to public access. Second, the USDA announced it has updated CRP soil rental rates. Both announcements came in a week when the USDA also released a study highlighting the immense benefits of CRP.

USDA Launches Public Access Incentive for CRP at the White House Conference on Wildlife Policy in Reno, Nevada, Vice President Dick Cheney announced a new incentive payment through the CRP to landowners who allow public hunting access on their property. Landowners who are enrolled in CRP will now be eligible for a $3 per acre incentive if they sign on to their state's hunting access program; the incentive is expected to open an additional 7 million acres of quality wildlife habitat for hunting. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will announce signup for the public assess incentive in the near future.

"Without access to places to hunt, there will be an erosion of people who go hunting - this is one of the most fundamental issues we face today," commented David Nomsen, Vice President for Government Affairs with Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever. "Enhancing a program like CRP that has been so successful at protecting critical wildlife habitat by encouraging landowners to open that land for hunting is a major victory for sportsmen and women."

The goal of this incentive is to double public access by providing up to 7 million acres of CRP land for public access in the next 5 years in participating states. The CRP public access incentive permits partnerships with existing state public access programs to identify and mark tracts of land as publicly accessible and publish maps for hunters and recreation enthusiasts. The incentive is consistent with current state public access incentives and will enhance the ability of state game departments to use hunting seasons as a wildlife management tool. The CRP public access incentive will be limited to CRP participants in the 21 states that already have public access programs. These 21 states are: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming.

Updates to Soil Rental Rates for CRP Since the new Farm Bill was signed in May, Pheasants Forever's top priority has been to push for updates to CRP soil rental rates. This year marks the third year in a row that FSA has updated soil rental rates nationwide in an effort to stay current with the market. These new rates will be used for any new CRP contracts approved going forward, and will make practices like CRP's continuous State Acres for Wildlife (SAFE) practice more attractive to landowners as they consider their options. Updated rental rates are now available for new CRP contracts. The increased average CRP rental rates have made them much more competitive with local cash rent.

"CRP has worked for more than two decades, because it has made good financial sense for our farmer friends," explained Nomsen. "These updated soil rental rates will help CRP continue to be a viable option for landowners, and consequently is a critical move by the USDA in support of CRP's wildlife legacy."

Immense Benefits of CRP A recently completed study concludes that two USDA conservation programs provide benefits on more than 5 million acres of wetland and adjacent grassland habitat in the Prairie Pothole Region. The study quantified how the establishment and management of prairie wetlands and associated grasslands through the CRP and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) have positively influenced ecosystem services in a number of ways. "This has been the biggest year of ups and downs I've ever experienced in the conservation world. We have fought diligently to prevent CRP from heading the way of the Soil Bank, and while we are certainly still in murky waters, last week provided a good deal of hope for the future," Nomsen said.

Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever are non-profit conservation organizations dedicated to the protection and enhancement of pheasant, quail, and other wildlife populations in North America through habitat improvement, land management, public awareness, and education. PF/QF has more than 129,000 members in 700 local chapters across the continent.
A bit of History of the Hermiston Irrigation System

American Settlement of the Umatilla vicinity began in 1860’s, when Oregon Trail migrants settled on the rich bottomlands along the Umatilla River. The first settlers diverted water to irrigate lands along the rivers to water pasture and to grow hay, grain, vegetables and fruit. By 1900, several thousand acres were irrigated near present- day Stanfield using small canals that diverted flood flows. High ground water allowed crops in these bottomland areas to grow well into summer. Settlement also spread onto uplands where wheat was raised using dry land farming methods. After the railroad was completed in 1883, the dry land wheat economy boomed and the county became one of the top grain producers in the Northwest.

Early in the 20th century this successful dry land wheat economy attracted the interest of both private irrigation entrepreneurs and the Federal Government. In 1902, Congress had created the US Reclamation Service to implement a Federal Program to construct irrigation projects in the arid west, since most private attempts at irrigation development failed from lack of funding and engineering expertise. The Service was renamed the Bureau of Reclamation in 1924. In 1903, The Service began to study the feasibility of building storage dams in the Stanfield vicinity to support a Federal irrigation project. In December 1905, Congress authorized construction of the East and West Divisions of the Umatilla Project. The East division, now called the Hermiston Irrigation District consists of 9,000 to 10,000 irrigated acres on the east side of the river. The HID lands are served by direct diversion from the Umatilla River supplemented by water stored in Cold Springs Reservoir. The direct diversion is made by the Maxwell Diversion Dam, and those waters are carried to HID land via the Maxwell Canal. Cold Springs Dam is an off stream reservoir that stores Umatilla River water transported to the reservoir through the Feed Canal. Water stored in the reservoir is distributed throughout the HID through a system of main canals and laterals. Cold Spring Dam, the Feed Canal, and the associated distribution system were constructed by the Service between them. Many of these systems are operating today together with The SWCD and the Hermiston Irrigation District they are being replaced with pressurized pipe to the water to the customers more efficiently. The L-line was replaced in 2007-08 and plans for replacing the I-line are under way hopefully for 2009.