



# NEW CHALLENGES NEW DIRECTIONS NEW FOCUS

Long-Range Plan  
2011-2015



## RESULTS-ORIENTED GOVERNANCE

The Spokane County Conservation District's Board of Supervisors meets annually to establish the goals and objectives for our annual plan of work. As a result of our efforts, it is our goal for the citizens of Spokane County to:

1. Practice sustainable stewardship and conservation, protecting natural resources;
2. Utilize the District as their local source of natural resource management assistance;
3. Understand and value the purposes and benefits of conservation practices and policies resulting in informed decisions regarding natural resources;
4. Implement conservation plans and systems resulting in sustainable natural resources.

## The Work of the SCCD, By the Numbers

- Over 3 million trees and shrubs have been planted in our region through our annual tree and shrub seedling sale since 1970
  - As of October 2010, the Direct Seed Loan Program has funded \$17,580,000 in loans putting conservation on approximately 500k acres in the participating counties
- In the past 10 years the Water Resources program has:
- Installed 60,400 feet of riparian fencing throughout Spokane County
  - Provided technical assistance to 750 landowners
  - Installed and maintained 11 stream discharge stations

This long-range plan was developed under the leadership of the Board of Supervisors for the Spokane County Conservation District.

**More information about the Spokane County Conservation District, its programs and projects, is available online at [www.sccd.org](http://www.sccd.org).**

### 2010 Board of Supervisors

Gerald Scheele, Chair  
Randy James, Vice Chair  
Dixie Riddle, Auditor  
Jaki Shrauger, Member  
Mary Sullivan, Member



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## The History of Conservation Districts

Conservation districts were formed on a national level following the dust bowl of the 1930s, which brought attention to the need to conserve natural resources, particularly soil.

The Soil Conservation Service, now the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was created under the Soil Conservation Act of 1935 to develop and implement soil erosion control programs. In addition, a model conservation district law for state governments was developed in 1937 under the leadership of President Roosevelt.

The goal of the program was to create local leadership to coordinate the conservation efforts of various entities and tailor them to local conditions and priorities. There are now nearly 3,000 conservation districts nationwide.

In 1973, the SCCD was formed through the consolidation of Southwest Spokane, North Spokane, Central Spokane and the Latah-Rock Creek districts. The District is a subdivision of state government. The State of Washington has 47 districts, granted operating authority in 1939 under Title 89.08 of the Revised Code of Washington.

The boundaries of the district now include all the lands in Spokane County except land lying within the incorporated city limits of Deer Park.



The Conservation District office is located on a two-acre parcel featuring the Green Zone, an interactive environmental education center, that is open to the public.



## The Spokane County Conservation District

The Spokane County Conservation District (SCCD) works in partnership with individuals, landowners, businesses, and government agencies to protect water resources, expand options for agricultural production, promote sustainable forestry practices, and to protect and enhance wildlife habitat throughout the urban and rural areas of the Spokane region.

Conservation districts were initially created with a focus on soil conservation and erosion control in agricultural regions. Conservation work has since evolved and expanded to address the pressing need for conservation of all natural resources in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

The SCCD has been active since the 1940s, teaching and facilitating sustainable land use and practices that allow us to meet current needs while leaving resources for the future.

The work of the SCCD now includes:

- Removing fish barriers and developing a regional fish barrier inventory
- Promoting energy conservation by providing free shade trees to eligible homeowners in Spokane County
- Writing, promoting, and advocating for legislation that directly addresses the sustainability of our natural resources
- Watershed planning and protection
- Assisting producers looking to transition to the environmentally-friendly practice of no-till or direct seed operations
- Selling low-cost tree and shrub seedlings, with a focus on native and drought-tolerant species, to the public through our annual seedling sale



**Conservation**  
is in our hands  
Handle with Care

The SCCD is governed by a Board of Supervisors who establish the overall direction and priorities for District programs. Supervisors are local residents who are elected by the community and serve voluntarily.

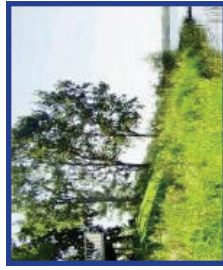
## The Conservation District at Work

The SCCD serves the citizens of Spokane County through a variety of natural resource conservation projects.

**Direct Seed Loan Program** The District offers special financing on loans for eligible producers to purchase no-till and direct seed agricultural equipment. Currently, the loan program is available in 17 districts in 14 counties in eastern Washington, as well as one county in North Idaho with the potential of eight more. We have the goal of increasing the number of direct seed acres in the region from the current 60% to 90% in the next five to ten years.



**Fire Risk Assessments** The implementation of the County Wildfire Protection Plan is a top priority of the District's Forestry department. In cooperation with fire districts and local jurisdictions, District foresters will continue to provide Firewise risk assessments and organize and conduct hazard fuels reduction projects throughout the county.



**Shoreline Restoration** Lake shoreline and aquatic habitat in Spokane County are being degraded and impacted at an alarming rate. The Water Resources department will continue to develop and coordinate habitat projects to address this issue. We harvest and purchase trees and shrubs annually for reforestation and enhancement of shorelines. An increase in shoreline naturalization projects is expected to occur on local lakes.

**Environmental Education** An important element of our communications strategy is providing environmental education to K-12 students and adults. During the 2009-2010 school year, we partnered with Franklin Conservation District to bring Wheat Week, Water on Wheels, and Trout in the Classroom to Spokane County schools, as well as adult education through workshops, conferences, and publications.



## Goals and Strategies 2011-2015

### *Educate and communicate to the public about the District, and its programs, and how we can serve the citizens of Spokane County.*

Place emphasis on branding, our Web site, targeted blogs and other electronic publications  
Maintain good working relationships with local media sources  
Maintain one-on-one communication with elected officials, community leaders, agencies and community partners  
Continue to provide environmental education to children and adults throughout the Spokane area  
Attend various public events, workshops and festivals

### *Monitor and promote legislation that affects the sustainability of local natural resources*

Establish good working relationships with local legislators  
Write, promote and advocate for legislation as needed  
Provide testimony as needed during legislative sessions

### *Begin the process of finding a replacement for the Special Projects and Communications Manager, who will be retiring during the timeframe covered in this long-range plan.*

### **Progress in 2009-2010**

- The SCCD participated in organizing numerous events and provided outreach through displays and presentations, including Ag Expo, the Direct Seed Breakfast, Spokane County Interstate Fair, Southeast County Fair, Arbor Day and Earth Day celebrations, Friends of Manito Anniversary, Water Festival, Farm Fair and the Spokane Youth Environmental Conference.
- SCCD staff secured substantial media coverage of District activities, including three articles in The Spokesman-Review and coverage on KXLY 4's morning news for the Reigel Court fuels reduction project and the annual tree sale.
- The Leadership in Conservation Award was given in 2010 to Green View Farms and in 2009 to the Malloy Family Holdings, LLC. Both were given plaques and were featured in the District newsletter and/or on the Web site.
- Monthly presentations were made to chamber, city/town councils and civic organizations such as: Liberty Lake City Council, Town of Millwood and the Eloika Lake Homeowner's Association.

## COMMUNICATIONS & EDUCATION



An important role of the SCCD is to provide the public with current and accurate information about their natural environment. Informed citizens are then able to take an active role and participate in managing, utilizing, and protecting the multitude of natural resources of which we are all a part.

The SCCD utilizes a variety of tools in providing education, such as:

- Publishing a biannual newsletter, and other brochures and fact sheets
- Participating in local events and activities
- Presenting various environmental lessons in Spokane area schools
- Hosting workshops and conferences
- Providing a Web site of information on the District, its programs and conservation practices

### **Environmental Education** In 2010

the District hired an Environmental Education Coordinator and during the 2009-2010 school year, SCCD partnered with Franklin Conservation District to bring Wheat Week, Water on Wheels, and Trout in the Classroom to Spokane County schools.



More than 7,500 students were reached in 2009-2010, through our Environmental Education department by either receiving the Wheat Week or Water on Wheels lessons, or through various outreach activities such as our involvement with the EnviroKids' Club and the Water Festival. The District will continue to participate in educational workshops and public outreach activities targeted at both children and adults.

## GOVERNMENT & POLICY RELATIONS

It is a priority for the SCCD to establish and maintain effective governmental relations to promote conservation-related policies. We will continue to closely monitor legislation that would affect how natural resources are utilized. If necessary, we will continue to write, promote and advocate for legislation that addresses specific issues affecting the sustainability of our natural resources.

**Soil Testing Lab** By the spring of 2011 the Soil Science department will design, construct, and operate a soil testing laboratory within the District facility. The lab will provide basic soil tests for small acreage farmers and urban landowners, and will be staffed by the District's Soil Scientist, volunteers from the WSU-Spokane County Extension Master Gardener program, and students from the Spokane Community College Natural Resource Program.

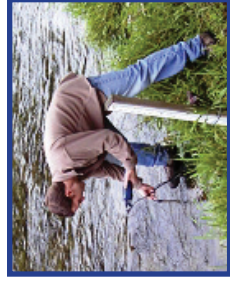


**Tree and Shrub Seedling Sale** Since 1970, the District has provided trees and shrubs for sale to the public through our annual seedling sale. The original purpose was to provide low-cost trees and shrubs for reforestation and wildlife habitat plantings. The scope of the sale has changed over the years with the primary emphasis now being placed on providing native and drought-tolerant plants for urban and rural landscaping.

**Small Acreage Farm Planning** Through a cooperative effort with the WSU-Spokane County Extension Office, Spokane Community College and the Pacific Northwest Farm Forum, a Small Farms Conference will occur in spring 2011. This annual event will feature seminars on a variety of topics important to people wanting to start farming or who need additional information to make their operation more efficient and profitable. This event will be the cornerstone of the District's new Small Acreage Program.

### **Gauging and Monitoring** The Water

Resources department will continue to maintain and operate stream flow gauging stations in the Little Spokane River and Hangman Creek watersheds. These stations provide excellent data to develop flow trends and can be utilized for pollutant monitoring in the future. In addition, SCCD will be monitoring long-term ground water wells in the Hangman Creek Basin; this information will be important to determine any current and future land use/development and aquifer levels.



**Energy Conservation** SCCD, in partnership with the Avista Corporation, has implemented an energy saving shade tree program. Avista pays for the trees that the District plants on the southwest side of eligible homes in Spokane County; this reduces the cost and energy needed to cool residential homes in the hot summer months.

## Long-Range Plan 2011-2015

The purpose of this long-range plan is to guide the work of the SCCD over the next five years. This is intended to be a fluid plan, which will continue to evolve as necessary to ensure the organization remains effective and responds to changing needs and demands.

Development of the plan began with a series of work-sessions among staff and the Board of Supervisors. The group assessed the resource problems, took inventory of the available staff assets and funding, and established actions and priorities for the years ahead. The draft plan was provided to the public for review in spring 2010. Staff compiled the comments received, incorporating them as appropriate into the plan during the District's July 2010 planning session.

The detailed goals and strategies expressed in this long-range plan are based on the following principals of the Conservation District:

**The SCCD Vision:** To help protect, conserve and enhance natural resources.

**The SCCD Mission:** To promote the sustainable use of natural resources within Spokane County.

**The SCCD Function:** To take available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user for conservation of soil, water and related natural resources.

**To carry out its work, the District may:**

- Enter into cooperative agreements with individuals, groups or other public agencies.
- Accept and administer loans and grants
- Assist with or implement conservation practices on public and private lands
- Disseminate information and perform demonstration projects
- Influence policies to sustain natural resources

## Progress in 2009-2010

- Developed four presentations for the Web Soil Survey and promoted a poster contest for the national theme of "Soils- Dig It," for Spokane students, grades 5-8.
- SCCD's soil scientist testified at the state capitol regarding soil scientist licensing legislation.
- Utilized GIS for changes to the Eloika Lake Management Plan, Hangman seepage run, and the Eagle Scout project on the Feryn Conservation Futures property.
- Developed a GIS map and layers for the Hangman Flood Management Plan.
- Developed soil interpretations for WRIs 55,56 and 34 using Soil Data Viewer.
- Distributed more than 50 soil testing kits to the public in 2010.

**Soil Testing Lab** By the spring of 2011 the Soil Science department will design, construct and operate a soil testing laboratory within the District facility. The lab will provide basic soil tests for small acreage farmers and urban landowners, and will be an important element of the new Small Acreage Program. The lab will be staffed by the SCCD soil scientist and volunteers from the WSU-Spokane County Master Gardener Program, and students from the Spokane Community College Natural Resources Program. Presentations will be conducted on how to take soil samples, interpreting soil sample results and nutrient management.



In the meantime, while the lab is being developed, the District is offering free soil testing kits to its customers. The kits include everything needed to properly take a soil sample, including instructions and a soil sample bag. There are kits available for lawn and garden and small acreage. The samples are sent by the customer to an independent lab whose fees vary depending on the analysis selected. The SCCD soil scientist is available to help the customer understand the soil interpretations once they receive their report from the lab.

**Natural Resource Inventory** A Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) is a statistical survey of land use and natural resource conditions and trends of areas on non-federal land. The data in the NRI will be used by the SCCD for our long-range planning to identify problem areas so we can develop priorities and prepare for the implementation of future projects. A nationwide NRI is conducted by the NRCS and is available to the public for their planning needs at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/). The SCCD will be compiling local data and the Spokane County NRI will include maps, tables, data and links to Web sites to view natural resource conditions. This inventory will be available online and by brochure in 2011.

## SOIL SCIENCE

Although the soils in Spokane County have not changed, there have been significant changes in technology, land use, and a need for soil information.

**Soil Survey** In 1998, the SCCD partnered with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to update the Spokane County Soil Survey. Prior to this project the last update to the survey was in 1968.

"A nation that destroys its soil destroys itself."  
--Franklin D. Roosevelt

Since that last update there have been many technological advances. This new technology was incorporated into the methods and procedures in the update, with an emphasis on not only agriculture areas, but also urban and forestry, among others.



Currently the only valid up-to-date soil information can be found online at the Web Soil Survey site at <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/>. Using the

Web Soil Survey you can access soil data for your area and determine the suitability of the soils for a particular use. You can download or print your customized report for free. The SCCD soil scientist can provide site-specific soil interpretations and workshops on how to use the soil survey.

## Goals and Strategies 2011-2015

### **Introduce updated Spokane Soil Survey when released**

Provide seminars/training using the online NRCS Web Soil Survey site

### **Provide soil-related technical assistance to the public, groups, and other agencies, as requested**

Provide soil testing and interpretations to Spokane County residents

Provide teacher workshops and classroom activities as requested

Provide technical assistance and support to land and soil judging contests and youth environmental camps

Assist the Department of Ecology on wetland and soil issues

Serve as contact for all soil-related inquiries from public, commercial and government sector

## Priority Actions

The following is a summary of priority actions to be carried out as part of the SCCD long-range plan:

- **Increase public participation in natural resource conservation efforts**
- **Reduce soil erosion through increased applications of no-till and direct seeding technology**
- **Expand the Direct Seed Loan Program to serve North Idaho, addressing impacts to water quality in shared watersheds**
- **Reduce loss of property and lives to wildfire through implementation of the County Wildfire Protection Plan**
- **Protect water quality and quantity through comprehensive watershed management planning and implementation, including water conservation efforts, establishment of riparian buffers, stream bank stabilization and water resource education**
- **Expand outreach efforts to increase recognition of the District and its programs**
- **Seek legislative approval for county legislative authorities to set special assessment rates according to need**

## Interested in doing more for conservation?

There are a variety of ways to get involved in natural resource conservation with the SCCD. Here are just a few:

**Join the Board of Supervisors** - The Board of Supervisors is comprised of locally-elected officials who serve voluntary three-year terms, providing direction on the SCCD's natural resource programs.

**Volunteer to help protect water quality** - The District maintains a volunteer pool for a variety of projects, including: water quality monitoring, stream bank restoration, riparian vegetation and stream cleanup.

**Assist us with protecting forests**- The Forestry program has many opportunities for those interested in assisting us with our efforts to protect and enhance urban and rural forests, such as planting and pruning projects.

**Call the office today to learn how you can get involved!**

## PRODUCTION AGRICULTURE

The Production Agriculture Department is working with producers in Spokane County to maximize profits while maintaining environmentally-friendly farm practices. Each Production Agriculture program provides a unique form of assistance to producers in the county to implement conservation practices on their farms.



**DIRECT SEED LOANS**  
The Direct Seed Loan Program is now available in 17 districts in 14 counties in eastern Washington, as well as one county in North Idaho with the potential of eight more.

### Production Ag programs include:

- Low-interest loans to producers for no-till and direct seed agricultural equipment
- Promotion of direct seeding operations
- Conservation farm plans
- Direct seed workshop and tours

## Goals and Strategies 2011-2015

### *Promote the Direct Seed Loan Program in eastern Washington and North Idaho*

Work with North Idaho Districts to take the program further into Idaho  
Support the new dealer network and Web site for the use of our loan program

### *Increase the utilization of direct seed and no-till practice techniques*

Work with producers in the region on the economic benefits of direct seed and no-till operations

Promote the Direct Seed Mentoring Program with producers in the region

Collaborate with the Department of Ecology and the Natural Resource Conservation Service to implement on-the-ground cost-share programs for the implementation of direct seed and no-till Best Management Practices (BMP)

Conduct and/or participate in a minimum of one direct seed or no-till tour each year

## Goals and Strategies 2011-2015

### *Watershed coordination/implementation projects throughout Spokane County*

Hangman Creek Livestock Implementation Plan  
Hangman Creek Direct Seed Mentoring Program  
Little Spokane River FFFPP project implementation  
Participate in Spokane River TMDL process  
Facilitate bi-state water quality group  
Develop and maintain Small Town Leak Detection Program  
Develop and maintain Irrigation Efficiency Demonstration Program  
Spokane River Fisheries Enhancement Project  
Hangman Creek Stream Stabilization Project

### *Continue data collection, monitoring and researching on waters throughout Spokane County*

Long-term monitoring of ground water wells in Hangman Creek watershed  
Continue operation and maintenance of stream gauging stations  
Eloika Lake aquatic weed monitoring  
Hangman Creek livestock operation inventory

### *Continue education and outreach*

Develop Direct Seed Mentoring Program workshops/coffee shop meetings  
Establish and maintain Little Spokane River water resources education program

### **Progress in 2009-2010**

- 2nd annual Willow Warriors Weekend in partnership with Trout Unlimited and The Lands Council planted over 3,000 willows on Hangman Creek in 2010.
- Hangman Hills Phosphorus Reduction Program was completed and documented an overall decrease of nearly 14% of phosphorus through the use of non-phosphorus dishwashing detergent.
- Completed five new Agricultural Water Enhancement Project (AWEP) contracts in Hangman Creek watershed (treating 2,500 acres).
- Developed Spokane SmartScape Web site with information on xeriscaping and water conservation.
- Continued operation and maintenance of stream gauging stations.
- Initiated the bi-state water quality group in the Hangman Creek watershed.
- Participated in many local watershed management groups and projects.

## WATER RESOURCES

The Water Resources department addresses water quality and quantity issues within the District's boundaries. We provide technical assistance, information and education, and project implementation to protect, enhance, and maintain the water resources across Spokane County.



The Water Resources department provides information on drought-tolerant landscaping through Spokane SmartScape.

Work of the Water Resources department includes:

- Watershed planning, inventory and protection
- Erosion control planning
- Education and outreach
- Quality and quantity monitoring
- Shoreline enhancement
- Streambank stabilization and revegetation

"Water is the driving force of all nature."  
—Leonardo da Vinci

### **Fish Barrier Inventory**

The Water Resources department is spearheading an effort to develop a regional fish barrier inventory in north eastern Washington. This effort is being coordinated with many different tribal and governmental agencies across the region. If funded, the project will be vital for identifying barriers, prioritizing basins and funding future programs.

**What is a fish barrier?** A fish barrier is any artificial (human-caused) instream structure that impedes the free passage of fish, such as dams, culverts, weirs, and road crossings.

The SCCD helps to replace these barriers through the Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFPP), which is administered by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. The FFPP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to landowners for removing these barriers.

Since 2007 the SCCD has completed nine FFPP projects with four more scheduled for 2011.

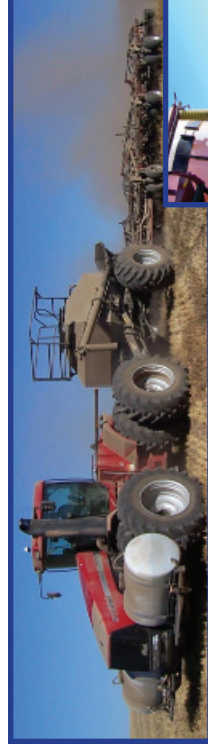


Before (above)



After (below)

**Direct Seed Mentoring Program** The adoption rate of direct seeding in the Pacific Northwest is low compared to the rest of the United States and internationally, where direct seeding is the standard farming method. The low adoption rate is primarily due to the lack of expertise and support available to those transitioning to direct seed systems, the high cost of new equipment, and concern about potential yield losses. To help address this problem, the SCCD, in cooperation with the University of Idaho, Washington State University, and the Department of Ecology, initiated the Direct Seed Mentoring Program, to pair experienced direct seeders with novice producers looking to transition from a conventional tillage system.



Funded by the State of Washington's Ag Pilots Program, in 2009 there were a total of eight experienced direct seeders (mentors) teamed with 10 producers interested in direct seed.



The mentors offered education about direct seeding and provided equipment and custom seeding services. A financial analysis of the program was completed by Dr. Kate Painter with the University of Idaho. The economic analysis showed:

### **Direct Seed vs. Conventional Tillage** *(spring grain crop)*

- 50% reduction in labor costs
- 42% savings in fuel and lubrication costs
- 20% reduction in repairs (including parts & labor)
- Approximate overall savings of \$13.50 per acre

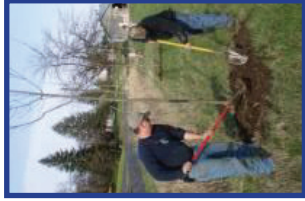
### **Progress in 2009-2010**

- The Direct Seed Loan Program ended 2009 with 31 internal loans totaling \$1,496,471.33 and seven Department of Ecology loans totaling \$652,544.29.
- Participated in a direct seed meeting with the Palouse-Rock Lake Conservation District on an advisory committee providing testimony on the benefits of direct seeding.
- Completed the first season of the Direct Seed Mentoring Program with the financial analysis showing a savings of \$13.50 per acre over conventional tillage.

# FORESTRY

Trees are an important natural resource in Spokane County, whether part of a forest or providing shade in your backyard. The Forestry department applies an ecologically-balanced approach to managing, utilizing, and protecting the forest wildlife resources.

While the SCCD specializes in assisting the non-industrial private forest landowner with their forestry issues, the District also provides assistance to the public and local government agencies in urban and rural areas.



District foresters participate in a variety of tree plantings throughout the Spokane area.

*"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The next best time is now."  
--Chinese Proverb*

The Forestry department provides:

- Reforestation plans and plantings
- Annual tree and shrub seedling sale
- Forestry education and public outreach
- Technical assistance and advice
- Fire risk assessments and hazard fuels reduction
- High-risk tree identification for landowners and developers

## Progress in 2009-2010

- Over 90,000 seedlings were sold to more than 500 customers during the 2009-2010 Annual Tree and Shrub Seedling Sale.
- The Forestry department partnered with several volunteer groups on tree planting projects including the City of Fairfield's Urban Forestry Program and The Susie Forest.
- 55 Firewise risk assessments were completed in 2009; 50 estimated for 2010.
- Several workshops were held at the District such as those for Community Canopy, Green Industries and the International Society of Arboriculture.
- 40 shade trees were planted in 2009 and 100 were scheduled to be planted in 2010 as part of the Avista Shade Tree Program to help conserve energy.
- 35 technical assists were made in 2009; 42 estimated for 2010.

# Goals and Strategies 2011-2015

## Assist communities in the county to obtain Tree City USA status

Establish three new Tree City USA communities

## Create and maintain an urban tree inventory for the entire county

Develop two new community urban tree inventories

## Encourage communities to create Firewise risk assessments to help them prepare in the event of a wildfire

Conduct three new Firewise community assessments

**Tree City USA** District foresters assist, and will continue to assist, communities in their efforts to qualify for Tree City USA status. Once the community reaches their desired status, the foresters will continue to help them expand their tree programs through planting projects, Arbor Day and Earth Day celebrations, and tree inventories and management plans.



Town of Fairfield mayor, Ed Huber, reading an Arbor Day proclamation.

Tree City USA is a program administered by the National Arbor Day Foundation in an effort to help communities create well-organized tree care programs. There are four standards a community must meet in order to be recognized as a Tree City USA.

1. The community must have a tree board or department; usually a group of concerned citizens who help develop and administer a tree management program.
  2. A community tree ordinance must be in place, which sets the policies to ensure proper tree planting, and maintenance and removal of hazard trees from public property.
  3. The community must have a community forestry budget of at least \$2 per capita.
  4. There must be an annual celebration of Arbor Day, such as a tree planting
- The benefits to becoming a Tree City USA include: improved public image, citizen environmental pride, and possible financial assistance from grants available only to those communities with Tree City USA status. Several communities in the Spokane area have already become official Tree Cities: Airway Heights, Fairchild Air Force Base, Town of Fairfield, Liberty Lake, Millwood and Spokane.