



**Pend Oreille
Conservation
District**

Spring Newsletter



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A few thoughts from our very own District Manager Alex Case-Cohen!



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Start Your SeedsRight

Start your own seeds this year! Master Gardener, Marge Helgeson, is here to help!



Spring 2021 Newsletter



COLLABORATIVE AIR QUALITY MONITORING IN PEND OREILLE COUNTY

by Ed Styskel Selkirk Alliance for Science

The air around us affects human health and many other life forms. That fact is the basis for the Pend Oreille Conservation District (POCD) and nonprofit Selkirk Alliance for Science (SAS) to develop and implement a collaborative citizen science air quality monitoring effort in the County. The Kalispel Tribe placed the first PurpleAir sensor in Pend Oreille County in July 2019. Public and private landowners throughout the county are now voluntarily hosting inexpensive consumer-grade PurpleAir sensors to measure the amount of fine particulate matter pollutants (PM2.5) in the air 24/7.

A map of sensor locations is posted on the POCD website, and monthly summaries for daily 24-hour averages of PM2.5 are posted on the SAS website.

Monitoring data in 2020 showed that highly toxic smoke from wildfires in California and Oregon reached Pend Oreille County on September 11, 2020, peaked on September 12, and dissipated by September 19. That episode

was several times more toxic than any other time period that year.

Wildfire smoke can be much more harmful to health than other forms of air pollution because burned homes and industrial sites contain metals, plastics, and many kinds of chemicals. Even though PM2.5 air pollution has decreased from stricter environmental regulations across most of the U.S., it's not the same for wildfire-prone areas like eastern Washington.

The EPA posts PM2.5 data obtained from more accurate but costly sensors on the national EPA Fire & Smoke Map. On a temporary basis, Washington Department of Ecology added their non-regulatory portable sensor in Newport to compare measurements with the local PurpleAir sensors. AirNow sensors are also at Colville and Sandpoint. Local PurpleAir sensors are displayed on the Fire & Smoke Map and add information from gaps in geography, even if with less accuracy.



Bear Aware Training

A virtual bear aware/bear spray training through the Pend Oreille County Library on April 14 (adults) and April 22 (kids). You can sign up at poacd.org or by contacting the library at 1-800-366-3654. After the training, those that registered can stop by a PO County library to receive a free can of bear spray (while supplies last).

April 14th 6:30-8pm
April 17th 4-5:30pm (Kids focused)



Ungulates on the Run as Spring Grass Grows

Alex Case-Cohen POCD District Manager

On my commute over Flowery Trail, I scan the expanse for some semblance of life. I've spotted a confused moose and her calf cross near the ski hill, and once, I came upon a small carnivore that could have been either a wolverine or a lynx, though I'm still unsure. I've heard wolves howling, have found cougar prints, and have stumbled upon bear scat, though I've never seen any of these carnivores in person. Though carnivores are an uncommon encounter, I know that as I drop into the Cusick Flats from Flowery Trail, I'm guaranteed to spot a herd of deer or a small gang of elk. Those of you who call Pend Oreille County their home may feel the same sense of awe watching these creatures emerge in early spring to find new grass on cold, crisp mornings and cool, breezy evenings. While many of us know when and where to look for these animals, we may not know much about their habitat, life cycle, or seasonal patterns. I spoke with Taylor Ganz, Ph. D. candidate with the University of Washington and member of the Washington Predator-Prey Project, to learn more.

Taylor studies ungulates, the deer and elk populations you may encounter in the Pend Oreille River Valley. She and her crew capture and collar females and newborns to better understand where they move and how and why they die. Her research is an integral part of the Predator-Prey project, a state legislated collaborative effort spearheaded by the University of Washington and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Predator-Prey Project seeks to utilize scientific measures to show the impacts of competition, predation, human influence and other factors on multiple predator and prey species found in our area (www.predatorpreyproject.weebly.com).

In order to humanely capture these ungulates, Taylor and her crew use clover traps, large fenced boxes filled with clover or other bait that utilize a trip wire to enclose the animal. Once captured, the deer or elk are tranquilized and collared; once they're released, the crew then monitors the animal's movement and are alerted when a mortality occurs. In her 4 years



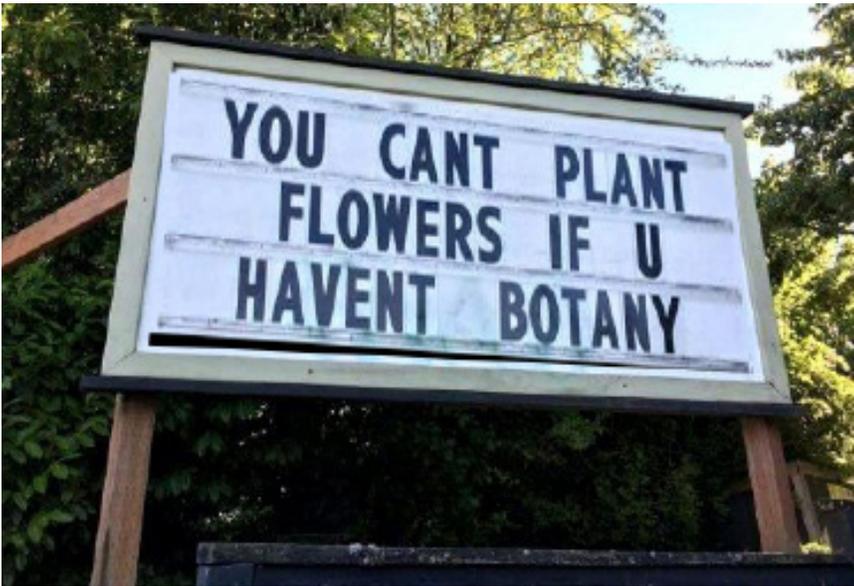
of experience in this area, she's found that the animals aren't the only ones with a story to tell. "It's so cool to meet and see how invested the local communities are... landowners tell me all about the animals so I don't just rely on GPS". Through these interactions, she recognizes the value of local ecological knowledge in her research.

According to Taylor, this time of year is difficult for the animals she studies.

"[Deer and elk] are trying to replenish their energy

reserves, especially as they have babies". That's why we'll see them as early as February grazing what they can to prepare to care for their young. According to Taylor, we'll start to see elk calves in May and fawns in June. As a defensive strategy, the young will be hidden in thick brush while does and cows graze a few hundred feet away. This distracts predators from their babies, but can prove fatal when separated by a road. "Around that time, I may see a big uptick in roadkill as moms are moving back and forth to where their babies are, though this is just speculation".

In this county, we're so lucky to be able to interact with wildlife on a daily basis, but it's our responsibility to be aware of how, when, and why they move across the landscape. Please don't disturb nested fawns; they are safe in their location and do not need to be moved. As the sun sets later and the grass grows greener, be sure to watch for these animals as we move into warmer weather.



Hello Spring, From Your Local Weed Board.

Where and how to start your Spring maintenance this year.

Sharon Sorby - Pend Oreille Weed Board

As spring rapidly approaches, our thoughts turn to our yards and fields – we can envision them lush and productive. We know it will take a bit of work to get them whipped into the shape of our mind's eye so, it's the perfect time to start the planning in order to realize this goal.

Creating a checklist of the steps needed to prepare for and complete your work can be helpful in getting organized and staying on track. A walk outside can help you determine if there are thin areas that would benefit from overseeding, or areas that look wimpy that could benefit from fertilizing, or a weedy area that needs treatment attention, or if the lawn is full of thatch or there is evidence of a potential problem you can't identify.

Weed Board staff are available to walk with you to help identify and offer solutions to potential issues you may have, or if we cannot, we can get you in touch with someone who can. Start your checklist with contacting the Weed Board; and, if you have a

farm, invite Alex with the Conservation District to come along as she is also a great resource with access to several programs available to help you meet your goals.

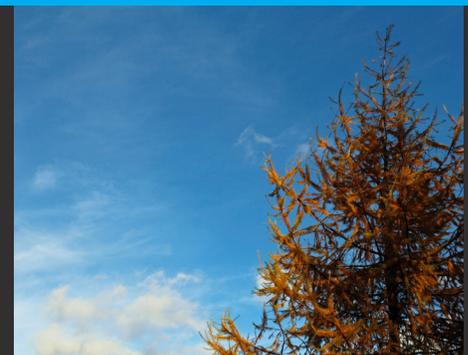
Identifying issues will let you know which equipment you will need to check to make sure it's in good working condition so, checking and performing maintenance of your equipment goes next on your checklist. If you have a sprayer, calibrating it needs to be added to your list. Take inventory of your materials, do you have all the spray products, fertilizer, or seed that you will be needing? Add calculating the amount you will need and ordering it to your checklist. If you'd like to add color to your yard, consider the advice on the sign – make sure you get to your favorite nursery early before the flowers you want are bought out by others.

Farm To Table Guide



WSU Extension and local Conservation Districts are working on a project to Update the 2016 Farm to Table Buying Guide for Ferry County, Stevens County and Pend Oreille County. This guide is created and distributed for public use to increase food access to local farms in the tri county area. If you are a local producer and would like to participate please contact Linda Hanses at Stevens County Conservation District for more information: 509-685-7579 or lhansen@stevenscounty.

SEASONAL FUN FACT



Did you know that Western Larch (*Larix Occidentalis*, also known as Tamarack) are better at withstanding normal surface fires due to their deep roots, and their needles. Tamarack needles are smaller and are never more than 5 months old, much younger than Ponderosa Pine, whose needles are replaced at least every 2 years, and maintain a higher water content.



Starting Right **With Seeds**

By Marge Helgeson WSU Master Gardener

Spring is almost here with Spring Fever replacing the Cabin Fever of winter. With thoughts of spring come preparations for a bountiful garden. Many garden plants, especially vegetables and annual flowers are easily started early to get a jump on our short season, here in the intermountain west.

Moisture and warmth encourage seeds to germinate. Most garden seeds started indoors germinate at a soil temperature of 75 to 90 degrees F. A porous soil kept evenly moist will provide enough air to support the germination process. If the sprouted seed continues to receive moisture, warmth, air and light, it keeps growing. If not, it dies. Some kinds of seeds need light to break dormancy and germinate, including many tiny seeds. Some larger seeds are also best left uncovered. Check seed packets to find out whether seeds have special germination requirements.

Some kinds of seeds require certain treatments before they'll start to germinate. Stratification: Some seeds must be exposed to cold moist conditions for a certain period before they will break dormancy and germinate. Many seeds can be planted in fall or late winter to germinate in the spring. Scarification: some seeds have hard seed coats that inhibit water absorption. Nick large seeds with a knife or file and scarify smaller seeds

by rubbing them between two sheets of sandpaper. Presoaking: Seeds can benefit from a soak in lukewarm water before planting. Drain the seeds and dry them briefly on paper towels to make them easier to handle. Presprouting: Sprouting seeds before you plant them can boost germination rates and give you more control when working with expensive or scarce seeds. Put the seeds between damp paper towels and keep them warm until they sprout.

You can start seedlings in open flats, in individual sections of a market pack, or in pots. You can recycle milk cartons and many types of plastic containers as seed-starting pots. Be sure to make a drainage hole in the bottom. Seed-starting mix should be free of weed seeds and toxic substances, hold moisture well, and provide plenty of air spaces. Sow the seeds to a depth of three times their thickness. Check the seed packet for special germination requirements. Label the pots.

Seedlings need regular attention. Provide the right amount of light, heat, and humidity to grow robust, healthy seedlings. Your new plants need to be hardened-off by gradual exposure to the elements. If you plant seedlings just before a rain, they will get off to a good start and you will have less watering to do. Have some fun and save some money by starting seeds indoors in the cloudy days of late winter and the rainy days of early spring.



**PEND OREILLE
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Protect and enhance all natural resources. Together.

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