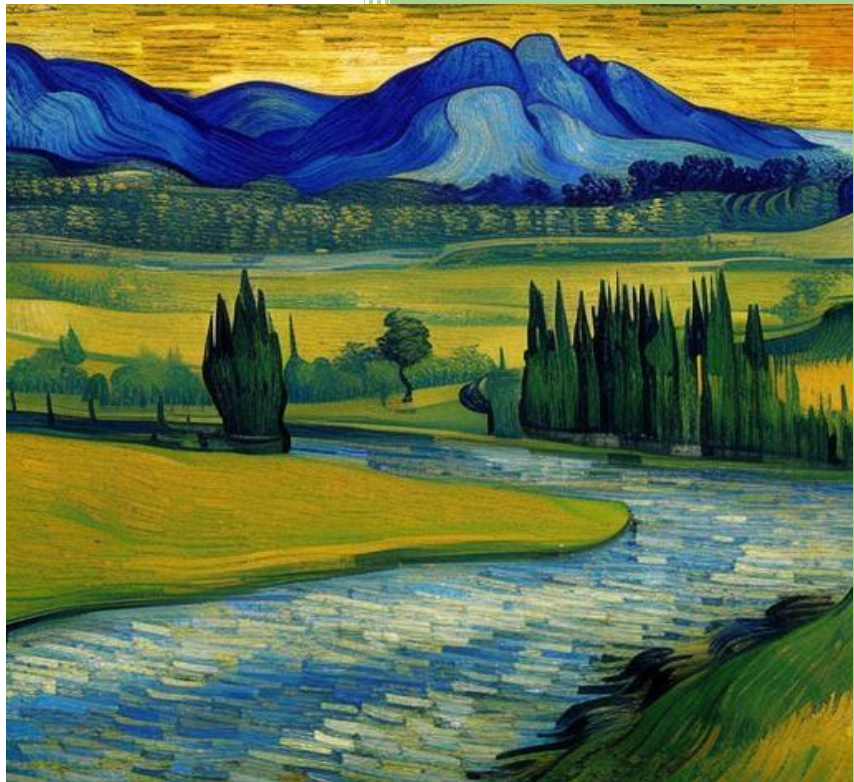


2023

# Community Discussion on Okanogan County Water Bank



Jordana Ellis

Okanogan Conservation District

11/17/2023

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What We Learned

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Appendix C – Okanogan County Water Bank Fact Sheet



## Overview and Purpose

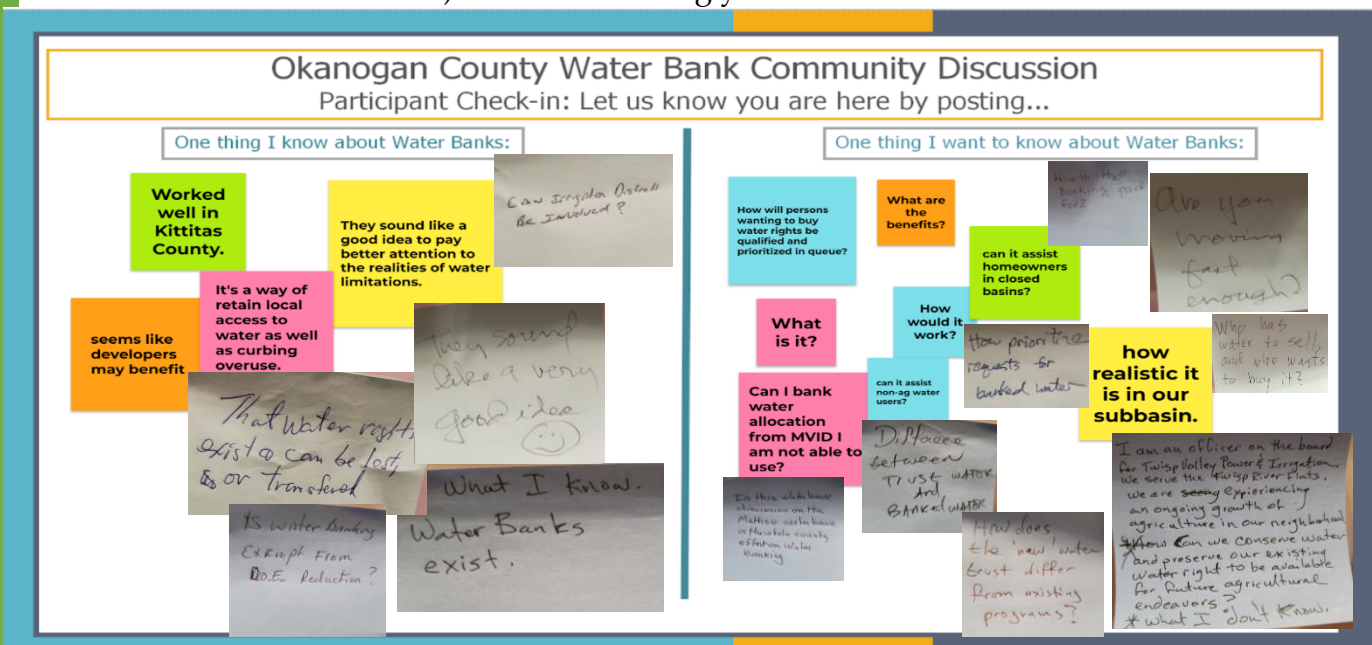
The purpose of this document is to provide a review of the first community discussion meeting on water banking in Okanogan County. The goal of this meeting was to connect with the community, receive input on the development of the Okanogan County Water Bank (OCWB), learn about stakeholder and user values, and determine the needs the water bank can serve. This was an opportunity for the public to learn about what a water bank is, the progress of the bank, and an idea of how stakeholders and partner organizations will be working with the bank.

## What We Learned

At the Community Discussion on Water Banking in Okanogan County, we learned that the community wants more information on the general characteristics of a water bank and the specific composition of the proposed Okanogan County Water Bank. We will continue obtaining input as we work through this process.

## Meeting Recap

The meeting was well attended with 35 in person participants and 5 logged in on Zoom. As meeting attendees entered the room, two questions were posed: 1) What is one thing you know about water banks? 2) What is one thing you want to know about water banks?



**Okanogan County Water Bank Community Discussion**  
Participant Check-in: Let us know you are here by posting...

**One thing I know about Water Banks:**

- Worked well in Kittitas County.
- They sound like a good idea to pay better attention to the realities of water limitations.
- Can Irrigation Districts be involved?
- It's a way of retain local access to water as well as curbing overuse.
- seems like developers may benefit
- They sound like a very good idea.
- That water rights exist can be lost or transferred.
- What I know. Water Banks exist.
- Is water banking exempt from D.O.E. Reduction?

**One thing I want to know about Water Banks:**

- How will persons wanting to buy water rights be qualified and prioritized in queue?
- What are the benefits?
- How will it work?
- How would it work?
- can it assist homeowners in closed basins?
- How prioritize requests for banked water?
- can it assist non-ag water users?
- Can I bank water allocation from MVID I am not able to use?
- Do this water bank share with the MVID water bank in Okanogan County? If not, what's the plan?
- Diff. between Trust water and Banked water?
- How does the 'new' water trust differ from existing programs?
- how realistic it is in our subbasin.
- Do you have fast enough?
- What has water to sell, and who wants to buy it?
- I am an officer on the board for Twisp Valley Power & Irrigation. We serve the Twisp area. We are seeing growth of agriculture in our neighborhood. How can we conserve water and preserve our existing water right to be available for future agricultural endeavors? \*what I don't know.

The above picture is a representation of answers that were received during the event, both in person and online participants, as well as some answers that were given on the survey posted prior to the meeting.

After a presentation by Tyson Carlson from Aspect Consulting (Appendix B) that defined a water bank, we asked the attendees to participate in a 45-minute activity. Attendees sat in groups of 4-6 around the room and were asked three questions, then rotated amongst tables, switching to different cohorts with each station change. Those that were attending the presentation online were asked to participate using an online application called Jamboard where they could post comments and responses to the questions.

The first question:

## What are the most important issues a water bank might address?

On a post-it note list 2 - 3 important issues you feel are weighing on our community where a water bank can offer a solution.



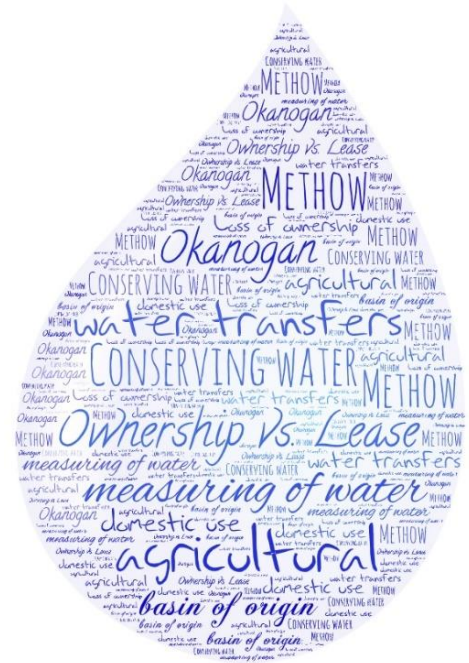
### Responses from in-person attendees:

- Loss of ownership of the right
- Ownership vs. Lease
- Terms of Leases and how those priorities are determined.
- Identifying who has excess water and who needs water. Encouraging measuring of water use.
- Conserving water in basin of origin.
- Protecting Agricultural viability
- Rights of Tribal Members
- Prevent waste and save water.
- Provide water for new uses.
- Meet current water needs.
- Providing supplemental water rights.
- Reduce overuse
- Protection from relinquishment

The above picture is a representation of answers that were received during the event, both in person and online participants, as well as some answers that were given on the survey posted prior to the meeting.

The first question sought feedback about issues that community members experience and how a water bank could help address those issues. Many felt agricultural viability is an important issue that has the potential to impact the economy of our county when changes to land use impact tax revenue. The movement of water rights/resources out of the basin of origin was listed by several attendees, as well as the potential of changing the purpose of water use from agricultural to domestic use. One group felt that the bank would encourage measurement of water use in the respective basins, which would assist in estimating current and future water needs.


Several questions were raised. While the purpose of the activity was not meant to offer answers, Presenters addressed some questions by referencing presentation slides and informing participants that these issues would need to be addressed further in future planning sessions and community meetings. Attendees asked: “what is the difference between, and opportunities being offered for ownership of water rights versus leasing of water?”; “what is the likelihood of changing water uses from seasonal agricultural to year-round domestic?”; and “how will water be measured or how can a water bank help with more accurate measurement of water use in general?”.



The second question:

### What concerns do you have about a water bank in Okanogan County?

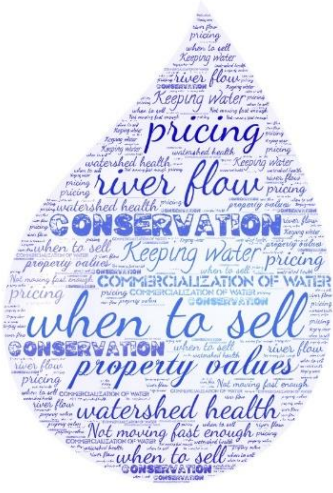
Use a post-it note to discuss any concerns you still have regarding a water bank after tonight’s presentation. Even if you see someone else list the same concern, please list yours as well. Please post as many concerns as you have using a new post-it each time.



**Responses from in-person attendees:**

- How to know when to sell water.
- Keeping water in basin of origin as long as possible.
- How pricing is set (leasing and buying).
- Future water for agricultural uses.
- How will conservation play a role in the Bank.
- Loss of property tax revenue when water is no longer tied to the land.
- Commercialization of water.
- Not moving fast enough.
- Extent and validity evaluations.

The above picture is a representation of answers that were received during the event, both in person and online participants, as well as some answers that were given on the survey posted prior to the meeting.



The concerns felt by the participants were cohesive and most answers were expressed by more than one person or group. The most prevalent concerns were the commodification of water and the potential loss of water resources. Several wanted to ensure that conservation and agriculture would remain a priority. Many raised concerns about the loss of agricultural land and how that would impact the tax revenues for the county.

Questions centered around balancing the major uses of water, protecting watershed health, and the impacts that occur to river flow when water rights are transferred from the Trust to a Bank.

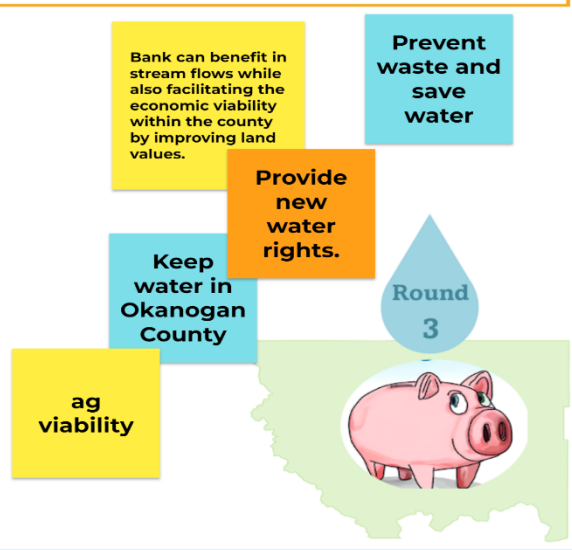
The third question:

### How will the community benefit from a local water bank?

On a post-it note list your top 3 ideas of how of a water bank would benefit either the County as a whole, the community you live in, or yourself individually.

Responses from in-person attendees:

- More efficient use of a scarce resource
- Water Management
- Conservation vs. relinquishment
- Climate resilience
- Ability to change to crops with higher water duty.
- Instream flows
- Keep water in the Valley
- Benefits depend on bank priorities.
- Expedites process
- Need more information
- Water for new uses
- provide local market
- Equitable distribution of water.
- Protecting land values
- Agricultural Viability



The above picture is a representation of answers that were received during the event, both in person and online participants, as well as some answers that were given on the survey posted prior to the meeting.

The attendees identified numerous individual and environmental benefits to the development of a water bank. The protection and management of a scarce natural resource was expressed by many. The provision of water for new uses, and the potential for drought resiliency was mentioned, alongside the call for equitable distribution of allotments.

The questions posed in this round of discussion were split between those about the future operation of the bank and ideas of how the bank could be beneficial to the county.

## Where We Go from Here

The information gathered at this event will be presented to the planning group developing the structure of the Okanogan County Water Bank (OCWB). The hope is to replicate this meeting in the Okanogan Watershed to provide input from the whole county. The next phase of outreach meetings will offer the community an opportunity to provide input on priorities and guidelines that will structure the management and operation of the OCWB.

For questions or further discussion on these topics or the present progress of the OCWB please contact Jordana Ellis at [jordana@okaongancd.org](mailto:jordana@okaongancd.org) or visit the Okanogan Conservation District [website](#).



Appendix A  
Meeting Agenda





## A Community Discussion on Water Banking in Okanogan County

November 17, 2023

Twisp Grange Hall, 6:00pm

The goal of this meeting is to connect with the community and receive input on the development of the Okanogan County Water Bank and to learn more about stakeholder needs for the bank. This is an opportunity for community members to learn about the water bank, the current status, and how stakeholders and partner organizations can work with the bank.

### Agenda:

- 5:30 – 6:00 Doors open, Welcome!
- 6:00 – 6:10 Introductions
- 6:10 – 6:25 Okanogan County Water Bank (Aspect and Okanogan CD)
- 6:25 – 7:05 World Café Activity (3-5 to a table)
- 7:05 – 7:10 Recap and next steps
- 7:10 – 7:30 Q&A with all partners (Okanogan CD, Aspect, MWC)
- 7:30 – 7:35 Closing and thank you




Appendix B  
Power Point Presentation:  
Water Banking in Okanogan County


# WATER BANKING IN OKANOGAN COUNTY

Tyson Carlson, LHG – Aspect Consulting, LLC  
 Jordana Ellis – Okanogan Conservation District

November 17, 2023







## ROLES

Who are the entities involved and what are their roles?

**Okanogan Conservation District**  
Co-Manager (Agricultural)

**& Okanogan County**  
Co-Manager (Domestic)




**Aspect Consulting**  
Water rights consultant

**Department of Ecology**  
Project funder & permitting agency

**Methow Valley Citizens Council**

**& Methow Watershed Council**




Partner and water bank facilitator (A direct resource for Methow Valley)

## GOALS

Why develop a water bank in Okanogan County?

- Create a resource that keeps water in Okanogan County.
- Protect water rights in Okanogan County from relinquishment and downstream transfers.
- Provide a fair market option for users that will be locally administered and managed.
- A source for new uses both agricultural and domestic in Okanogan County.








## WATER BANKING 101

What is water banking?

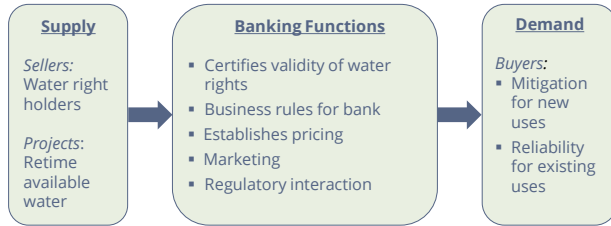
**“Water banking is an institutionalized process specifically designed to facilitate the transfer of developed water to new uses.”**

- Water banks redistribute water right authority between sellers and buyers
- Washington State’s Trust Water Rights Program (RCW 90.42 and 90.38)
- Protect water rights from relinquishment due to non-use

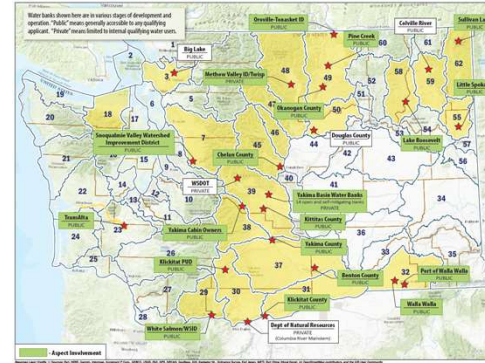
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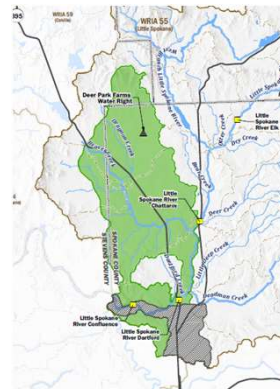


## WHAT IS POSSIBLE

What are the capabilities and limitations of water banking?

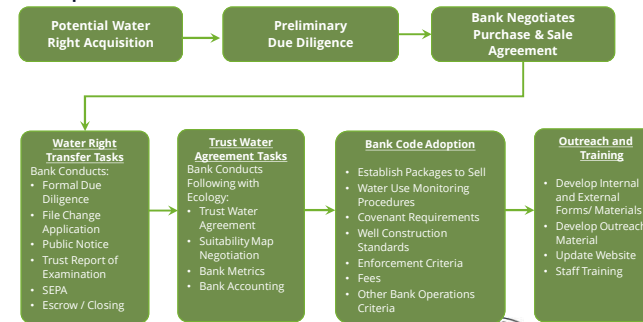
**Ability to mitigate for new uses is limited by the water rights in the bank.**

- Type of water right (agricultural)
- Period of use (seasonal or year-round)
- Location (diversion or well)
- Annual quantity (consumptive use)
- Area of Mitigation Suitability



## PROCESS OF WATER BANKING

What does the process look like?



## PROCESS OF WATER BANKING

What does the process look like?

### Seeding the bank

Identification of available and eligible water rights to "seed" the bank

Conveying those water rights into the State's Trust Water Rights Program

Establishing an agreement with Ecology regarding management of those rights

### Establishing the structure of the bank

Forms, procedures, guidance, policy

Outreach to community and stakeholders



## STATUS

Where are we at in the process?

- The Okanogan Conservation District received a grant through Ecology's Water Banking Grant Pilot program for initial acquisition and establishment of the District side of the bank.
- The District and County are in the process of requesting additional funding for further water right acquisition and establishing the County side of the bank.
- Working through the outreach, initial development of water bank structure and permitting through Ecology



Welcome To The Conversation!

**World Cafe Guidelines**

CONTRIBUTE YOUR THINKING

HAVE FUN!

LISTEN TO OTHERS

FOCUS on what matters

SLOW DOWN & you have time to think & reflect

Speak with your MIND...and HEART

Facilitate meaningful dialogue

System Together for patterns, insights & deeper connections

LISTEN & CONTRIBUTE IDEAS

Round 1

What are the most important issues a water bank might address?


As a group list 3 or more important issues you feel are weighing on our community where a water bank can help work toward a solution.

- If your group thinks of more than 3 list your top 3 on this sheet.

What concerns do you have about a water bank in Okanogan County?


As a group discuss any concerns you still have after tonight's presentation. List all concerns of participants and mark any that are felt by more than one of the group.

Round 2



How will the community benefit from a local water bank?

Round 3



As a group list 3 or more benefits of a water bank you feel would benefit either the County as a whole, the community we live in, or yourselves individually.

- If your group thinks of more than 3 list your top 3 on this sheet.

**Next steps:**





- Planning group will take community input and assimilate into a harvest document. This will assist us in identifying priorities and inform the development process.
- Sign up to receive the harvest document or check the websites at Okanogan Conservation District and Methow Watershed Council.
- Plan to attend the next meeting where we will discuss priorities and guidelines







**THANK YOU**

Appendix C  
Okanogan County Water Bank Fact Sheet



## Q What is a Water Bank?

The water supply in the majority of the state is fully allocated, which means that generally new water rights are no longer available. The legislature wanted to create a tool for providing new sources of water, so they established legislation to allow the State to establish water banks.

Water banks are essentially one or more water rights that have been conveyed to the State's Trust Water Rights Program, and are managed under an agreement between the water banker and the State (Department of Ecology). The water rights are then protected from relinquishment, and able to provide mitigation for new water uses within an eligible area (referred to as the mitigation suitability area). Water banks are a proven and effective tool for management of water rights.

## Q What is the Okanogan Conservation District?

The Okanogan Conservation District is a non-regulatory agency that works with volunteer landowners towards conservation efforts across Okanogan County. The District provides services related to natural resource conservation such as habitat and water conservation, agricultural assistance services, wildfire preparedness and recovery, as well as, youth and community conservation education.

## Q What is the Motivation Behind the District Creating a Water Bank?

Establishment of a water bank pairs well with the District's focus on water conservation and maintaining viable agriculture. Water banks create a way for us to keep water in our county and make it available for re-allocation for new uses and the long-term benefit of the county.

**Local preservation and management of water rights** - Typically, water rights can be transferred downstream but not back upstream. This means that when water rights get transferred downstream out of headwater basins like in Okanogan County, they can't be transferred back up stream. Additionally, like most places in Washington state, water rights in Okanogan County are over-allocated and the State is no longer issuing water rights for new uses. A water bank would provide a mechanism for existing water rights in the County to be protected from relinquishment and provide water for new agricultural uses within the County for the future.

**Providing mitigation for new water rights** - Water from the Okanogan County Water Bank is intended to be used to supply fair-market mitigation for new water rights within Okanogan County, that is administered and managed locally. The District's side of the bank will supply mitigation for new agricultural uses, while the County side of the bank will supply mitigation for year-round domestic uses. The exact locations of the new uses will depend on the water rights which are acquired into the bank.



### **Q What is the Process of Creating a Water Bank?**

The process consists of both seeding the bank (putting water rights into the bank) and establishing the structure of the bank. Seeding the bank entails identifying available and eligible water rights, conveying those rights to the State's Trust Water Rights Program, and finally establishing an agreement with Ecology regarding management of those rights. The structure of the bank consists of forms, procedures, guidance, and policy and will be informed through outreach to the community and stakeholders.

### **Q Where is the District Getting Funding for this Effort?**

The legislature heard the concerns of the community and created the Water Banking Proviso to help protect water rights in upstream basins. The District received one of the first grants issued through Ecology's Water Banking Pilot Grant Program in 2023, and is continuing to submit applications as new acquisition opportunities arise.

### **Q When will the Okanogan County Water Bank be Up and Running?**

We are currently in the outreach, initial development and permitting phase. We're working on getting feedback from the community and collaborating with the County to develop the internal workings of the water bank including documentation, procedures and guidance, in addition to working on the legal agreements and permitting required to seed the bank.

### **Q How Can the Community Participate Through the Process?**

We need community support and involvement, both for putting water into the bank and using water from the bank, as well as with guiding the water bank to serve the needs of the community. The water bank also provides an opportunity for individuals who have water rights they no longer need and want to preserve their water rights for the benefit of future agriculture in their community. If you have a water right that you think you may no longer need now, please reach out to us.

### **Q How Can People Learn More?**

Contact **Jordana Ellis** at the Okanogan Conservation District - [jordana@okanogancd.org](mailto:jordana@okanogancd.org)