The Dirt

Asotin County Conservation District
Monthly Newsletter

July, 2026

www.asotincd.org

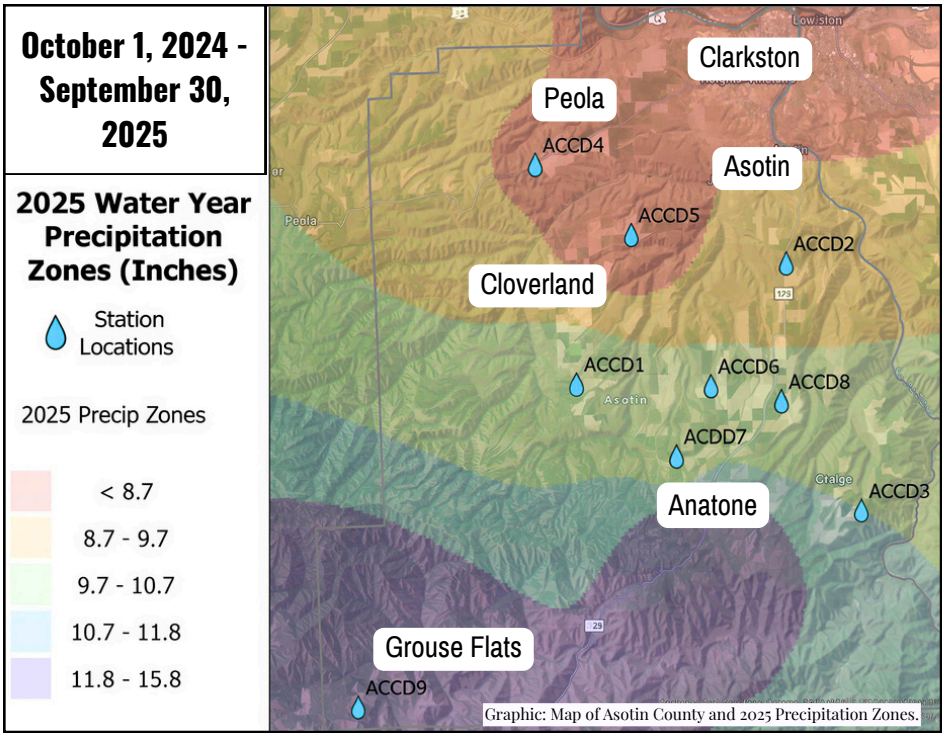
Above Photo: 2026 Canola harvest at Cloverland, WA.

HARVEST BEGINS AS WASHINGTON ENTERS 4TH YEAR OF DROUGHT.

ACCD's weather sensor network collects real-time precipitation, temperature, and wind data to help our community prepare and adapt to weather conditions and trends as they unfold.

The graphic on the right is a map of Asotin County with color overlays showing observed precipitation zones and the locations of ACCD weather stations for the 2025 water year (Oct. 2024 – Sept. 2025).

The "water year" aligns with the natural hydrologic cycles of precipitation. Winter snowfall that happens at the end of a calendar year affects water storage, crop cycles, and the flow in rivers and streams in the following spring and summer.



Graphic: Map of Asotin County and 2025 Precipitation Zones.

Despite our overall dry pattern, 2026-YTD data shows Asotin County recorded the "7th Wettest March," and the "16th driest June" in the last 132 years! Snowpack is nearly the lowest we've seen in the last 40 years despite March snowstorms (www.drought.gov).

Short periods of above averages temperatures fueled abundant herbaceous plant growth late in the season, resulting in a recovery of some crop yields. The excessive fine-fuel loading this season has significantly increased the noxious weed growth and wildfire hazards throughout our region. (NW Interagency Coordination Center: https://gacc.nifc.gov/nwcc/)

FOLLOW REAL-TIME WEATHER CONDITIONS AND CHECK OUT THE ACCD SENSOR NETWORK HERE: → **WeatherUnderground.com** **AnatoneWeather.com**

THE ASOTIN RIPARIAN ASSESSMENT PROJECT

What is a "Riparian Buffer"?

The transitional land and vegetation adjacent to water bodies, including floodplains and streambanks. **Riparian areas serve as natural buffers between land and water; our communities and ecosystems depend on these critical spaces for clean water and habitat.**

Healthy riparian buffers have stable banks with mature vegetation, a dense canopy shading the stream, meandering low-velocity channels and floodplains, and a supply of woody debris that drops into the stream naturally to create complex habitat for fish and wildlife.

Photo: Riparian buffer in Asotin, WA.

Why are Riparian Buffers Important?

Water Quality: Buffers filter sediment, nutrients, pesticides, pathogens, and pollutants before they enter the water. Tree/shrub canopies shade waterways to preserve cold water temperatures for fish.

Wildlife Habitat: Buffers provide shelter, food, water, nurseries, and critical travel corridors for fish and wildlife. Complex habitat features create and sustain wildlife biodiversity, resilience, and survival.

Reduced Flood Impacts: Buffers reduce water velocities, absorb excess water, capture sediment and debris, and filter runoff. Plant roots hold soil in place to reduce future erosion.

Graphic: Riparian buffer illustrated diagram.

High-Impact Riparian Restoration Concepts

Fish Passage Barriers: Modify or replace undersized culverts or crossings that block fish from reaching upstream spawning grounds.

Woody Debris: Strategic placement of trees and logs in streams to slow water velocity, create pools and complex habitat, and to trap gravel for spawning beds.

Riparian Buffers: Planting native vegetation to protect water quality, filter pollutants, prevent erosion, stabilize banks, provide shade, and sustain biodiversity.

Floodplain Reconnection: Restore natural inundations of floodplains and low-velocity channels during flood events. Creates complex habitat, reduces flood impacts, filters pollutants, increases water distribution, supports riparian plants, and protects seasonal streamflow.

DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY State of Washington

DO YOU LIVE NEAR A STREAM?

ACCD OFFERS FREE RIPARIAN BUFFER ASSESSMENTS

Contact Brad Riehle for more information:
Brad@asotincd.org (509) 552-8121

Noxious Weed Spotlight:
Spotted Knapweed *Centaurea stoebe*

LISTING STATUS:
CLASS B REGULATED NOXIOUS WEED, CONTROL IS REQUIRED.



Noxious Weed Profile:

Impacts
Spotted knapweed is a very aggressive species that can quickly infest large areas. Infestations increase production costs for ranchers, degrade wildlife habitat, decrease plant diversity, increase soil erosion rate and increase fire risk.

Habitat
Found in Southeast Washinton and all throughout Asotin County. Found in dry meadows, pastures, rocky areas, gravel mines, roadsides, railroads, airports, vacant lots, hayfields, forest clearings and the sand/gravel floodplains of streams and rivers.

Identification
- Biennial or perennial growing up to 5 feet, short tap root.
- Hairy and rough with a woolly appearance.
- First year plants start as a rosette with deeply lobed leaves, produces a flowering stem the second year.
- Flowers are pink to purple and are surrounded by black-tipped bracts, giving the flower head a spotted appearance. Plants produce flowers continuously from early summer into the fall.
- Leaves blue gray in color, ranges from unlobed on the upper part of the plant to lobed on the lower part of the plant.
- Seeds are 0.1 inch long, oval shaped and black/brown in color. Seeds have short bristles (pappus) on one end.

Biology
- Plants reproduce by seed. Each plant produces up to 1,000 seeds which may be viable for up to eight years.
- Produces chemicals that may be carcinogenic (cancer causing) in large quantities.

What is the definition of a "Noxious Weed"?

In Washington State, a noxious weed is a non-native, aggressive plant that has been legally designated as highly destructive, competitive, or difficult to control. Because they lack natural predators, these plants destroy native habitats, reduce crop yields, create fire hazards, and can even be toxic to humans and livestock.

Source: https://www.nwcb.wa.gov/

How to Control it:

Prevention
Early detection is key to prevent invasion. When any ground disturbing activity occurs, seed/plant the appropriate native vegetation once the work is complete.

Mechanical
Seasonal mowing and tillage. Plant produces chemicals that may be carcinogenic (cancer causing) in large quantities. Wear gloves when handling spotted knapweed.

Biological / Cultural
Seasonal grazing can be used as a management tool. Several biological controls are available for Spotted Knapweed:
- Sulfur knapweed moth (Agapeta zoegana) and Knapweed root weevil (Cyphocleonus achates) larvae feed on the plant's roots.
- Knapweed peacock fly (Chaetorellia acrolophi), Larinus obtusus, blunt knapweed flower weevil, and Larinus minutus, a seedhead weevil larvae feed on the plant's seeds.
- Green clearwing fly (Terellia virens) larvae feed on seeds within flowerheads of spotted knapweed.

Chemical
- Herbicide may be useful for large, dense infestations. If the site is wet or along the water's edge, it may require a permit issued by the state Department of Ecology.
- Follow all applicable laws and regulations regarding herbicide use. Follow chemical label instructions for application. Wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, shoes, and eye protection.
- Control with selective herbicides promotes grass production, which in turn increases the suppression of knapweed. The recommended spraying time is in the spring when the plant is in the rosette stage. However, chemicals can be used for control throughout the growing season.
- Recommended chemicals include:
  - May, June - 2, 4-D, WeedMaster, Range Star, Rifle D, Prescott, Milestone and Tordon.
  - July - Tordon and 2, 4-D, Transline, Mileston and Roundup (spot spray only)
  - August, September, and October - Tordon and 2, 4-D, Milestone, WeedMaster and 2, 4-D

Looking for More Info?

Contact the Noxious Weed Control Board at ACCD:
(509) 552-8119 - weeds@asotincd.org - www.asotincd.org

A message from the Washington Master Gardeners, and the WSU Extension Green School:

WASHINGTON GARDENER CERTIFICATION COURSE

Classes Begin: October 5, 2026
Where: Fully Online and Flexible

Registration Opens:
August 17 - September 30, 2026.

***Limited scholarships are available for those considering volunteering as a Master Gardener.**

Course Topics Include:

- Basic Botany and Plant ID
- Pests and Diseases
- Flowers and Pollinators
- Composting and Soil Management
- Trees and Shrubs
- Vegetables, Fruits, and Berries

Love gardening, but find it challenging in Washington's unique climate?

Earning a Washington Gardener Certificate can help! Learn research-based techniques to create a thriving garden that also benefits our environment. From water conservation to supporting local ecosystems, discover how your gardening choices make a difference.

The Green School is a WSU Extension Course for anyone interested in earning a Washington Master Gardener Volunteer Certification, or a Washington Gardner Certificate Course. The certificate will help supplement your resume, grow your gardening knowledge and help promote your business. This class is fully online and uses the "Pacific Northwest Gardener's Handbook Growing for the Future," and is available free of charge online.

More Information and Registration:
https://greenschool.extension.wsu.edu
Email: mgardener@asotincountywa.gov
Asotin Extension Office: 509-242-2009.

SAVE THE DATES:

2026 Annual Asotin Days Festival:
August 7th - 9th in Asotin
More info at: www.CityofAsotin.org

Important Upcoming Events:

ACCD Board Meeting: August 6, 2026, at 6pm
ACCD Board Meeting: September 10, 2026, at 6pm
ACNWC Board Meeting: October 20, 2026 at 6pm

ACCD Office Closed:
SEPTEMBER 7TH - LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

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Fun Fact: Canola seeds contain about 40% oil, which is commonly used for cooking oil or as an efficient and versatile feedstock for biofuels, including renewable diesel, which performs much like conventional diesel. When the seeds are crushed, they leave behind canola meal which has found a good market with cattle producers. (Source: CHS, Inc. https://www.chsinc.com/news-and-stories/2026/06/09/a-golden-opportunity-for-canola)