

FRANKLIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2024-25 Featured accomplishment



BEFORE

The District and partners planting and then launching the six natural wetlands at Mesa Lake. Photo by Riley Zionce, Franklin Conservation District.



AFTER

The six natural floating wetlands in Mesa Lake.

Resource concern

Riparian restoration in the Columbia Plateau is limited by arid conditions, steep banks, invasive vegetation, and lack of voluntary landowner options. Traditional riparian plantings often fail to meet buffer expectations. This impacts fish, wildlife, water quality, and landowners seeking conservation solutions. Franklin Conservation District initiated this pilot project to test artificial floating wetlands as an alternative, agriculturally viable approach to enhance riparian habitat, stabilize banks, and improve water quality.

Featured project

Franklin Conservation District constructed and deployed 11 floating wetlands (five synthetic, six natural) at Mesa Lake and Powerline Lake. Native plants established successfully, providing habitat for fish, birds, and pollinators while demonstrating potential for nutrient uptake, bank protection, and invasive species suppression. Natural rafts showed stronger plant vigor and are expected to biodegrade after use. Community response was positive, with interpretive signage supporting public interaction. Monitoring continues, but early results suggest floating wetlands can provide cost-effective, scalable, and novel tools for riparian enhancement in arid landscapes.

Costs & partners

This project was funded through the State Conservation Commission's Riparian Grant Program. Project costs totaled approximately \$38,000, covering materials, construction, planting, deployment, and monitoring.

Other accomplishments



Dairy Farmers of Washington sponsor Wheat Week to help students learn where their food comes from. Thanks to Washington's rich soils and water, kids enjoy fresh milk with their cookies (made from Washington wheat).



Mark Nielson retires after 37 years at Franklin Conservation District. His tireless work has advanced conservation and inspired generations across our county.



Water conservation projects across programs helped save approximately 22 million gallons of water. That's more than 33 Olympic-size swimming pools.

📍 Congressional districts 4 & 5 📍 Legislative districts 8, 14 & 16

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