

# ***News Release***

## **Eastern Washington Farmers Cut Diesel Emissions, Protect Water Quality, Reduce Soil Loss and Save \$\$\$ by Converting to “No-Till/Direct Seed”**

(Spokane, Washington - July 17, 2007) Twenty one farmers in Northeastern Washington are now using a different method of soil preparation on 16,000 acres, a conversion that protects their farm, is beneficial to the environment and saves them money. The conversion, to what’s known as “no-till/direct seed,” was undertaken thanks to a \$100,000 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant, primarily aimed at reducing diesel air emissions.

The grant program offered incentives of \$4 per acre to convert from conventional tillage practices - using a disc or other mechanical method to break-up and turn over the soil - to no-till/direct seeding.

No-till/direct seeding operations place seed and fertilizer into the residue of the previous crop in only three to four field operations with minimal disturbance of the soil. In contrast, conventional farming practices can require up to nine trips around the field to prepare and plant the soil.

Reducing the number of passes a tractor takes not only cuts diesel emissions, but reduces fuel costs, lowers general wear and tear on people and machinery. By using what are called “drills” instead, farmers reduce soil erosion and soil compaction, while increasing soil moisture and organic matter. This practice also allows for more precise application of fertilizer, reducing fertilizer costs. In addition, water quality is protected through reduced runoff of sediments and nutrients.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency funded this project as part of its “West Coast Collaborative”, a multi-state, multi sector effort to reduce all sources of diesel emissions. According to Elin Miller, EPA Regional Administrator in Seattle, the Agency is proud to be a part of the team encouraging northwest farmers to consider no-till and direct seeding.

“Working with agricultural producers is a top priority for EPA,” said Miller. “And by funding projects like this, we can protect the land, air and water while helping our farmers remain leaders in the world marketplace. Investing in no-till and direct seed pays environmental dividends for decades to come.”

The project was coordinated by the Upper Columbia Resource Conservation and Development Council, Blue Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Council, and EnSave, Inc.

“Eastern Washington growers are fortunate to be among a few groups nationwide selected to receive this grant money,” said Gerald Scheele, Treasurer of Upper Columbia RC&D. “It really speaks to how our local growers are working hard to be good stewards of the land.”

Other program partners who helped to market the program to producers are: The Spokane County Conservation District, Palouse Conservation District, Palouse-Rock Lake Conservation District, Pine Creek Conservation District, Whitman Conservation District, Asotin County Conservation District, Columbia Conservation District, Pomeroy Conservation District, Walla Walla County Conservation District, and the Washington Department of Ecology.